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NARRATIVE OF A JOURNEY

THROUGH THE PROVINCE OF

KHORASSAN

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THROUGH THE PROVINCE OF

KHORASSAN

AND ON THE

N.W. FRONTIER OF AFGHANISTAN

IN

1875

33025

BY

COLONEL C. M. MacGREGOR, C.S.I., C.I.E.

BENGAL STAFF CORPS

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON:

WM H. ALLEN & CO., 13, WATERLOO PLACE, S.W.

1879.

915.54
Moc/Mar
33025

915.83

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WOODFALL AND KINDER,
MILFORD LANE STRAND W.C.

Dedicated

TO THE MEMORY

OF HER

WHOSE LOSS PROMPTED THESE WANDERINGS.

PREFACE.

THE following narrative comes rather after date. It would have been better that I should have issued it immediately after my return to England, at the end of 1875. But, the fact was, the result of that journey made me pretty sick of Persia; then the distractions consequent on a visit home, after a long period of years; my having soon after undertaken another journey; and finally, the calls of my ordinary duty, have combined to put it off from day to day. I am, therefore, conscious of the disadvantage under which it now appears. The only merit I claim for it is, that it is a soldier's plain unvarnished account of the incidents and accidents of travel in a country which, I hope, will continue to interest all Englishmen.

C. M. MACGREGOR.

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KHORASSAN.

CHAPTER I.

BOMBAY TO SHEERAZ.

When I contemplated taking leave to Europe in 1875, I had formed an idea of riding through Afghanistan to Herat and Mushudd, and then making the Caspian at Astrabad. Unfortunately there was an order of Government against going through Afghanistan, so that if I wanted to go to Mushudd I should have to travel 6,000 miles by way of Persia, while the direct distance from Rawul Pindee, where I was then stationed, is not more than 1,000 miles.

The explanation of this is, that notwithstanding our subsidy to Shere Alee, and our uniform kindness to him, he had not taken any measures to ensure the most ordinary safety of an English gentleman travelling through his country. There does indeed seem something anomalous in our treatment and opinion of this potentate. On the one hand we permit him to assert that he is powerless to protect an English traveller from the few ruffianly robbers or fanatics who alone would assail him. On the other we hold the Amir up to the gaze of uninitiated Europe as our bulwark against Russia. *Risum teneatis amici?* However the state of our political

relations being such, if I went at all to Persia I should have to go the weary old round by Allahabad and Bombay.

I may be asked why I did not, like Burnes, risk the dangers of the shorter route, and I can only give the answer which would be given by scores of my brother soldiers, among whom the spirit to dare, and the heart to do, is as strong as ever it was in the days of old. I would gladly have risked all that Afghan cutthroats could have done to me, but one cannot deliberately disobey orders.

I need not trouble my reader with any description of Bombay, but I must say I was tickled to find nearly everything as it was at my last visit. The inhabitants are far too English to be frightened out of any custom or practice, however preposterous, by aught short of an earthquake, and so, of course, I found the same villanous buggies, the same dirty exorbitant hotels, the same busy crowded streets, with the same five-storied, many-coloured and ramshackle old houses covering, as I suppose, an equal number of millions as formerly. There was the splendid harbour lying as before unprotected, as if there were no navies in the world but our own, and we could have no enemies in the future. Something certainly had been done to Bombay in the way of demolition, but the substituted improvements are as English as all the rest. I can hardly say, indeed, that there has been an improvement in this respect. Before, when one looked on the fine open plain stretching seaward, and saw in it the makings of a glorious esplanade, there was at least hope left to one. There was the possibility that some one might arise equal to the occasion, who, knocking down all the dirty buildings, such as the marine lines, &c., which encumbered its space and obstructed the view, would by

erecting all round a series of noble mansions, give to Bombay an esplanade at once worthy of her and unsurpassed by that of any city in the world. But now all is black despair; the marine lines are still there, and the esplanade is irretrievably spoilt by a mass of huge incongruous buildings brought together from the four quarters of the globe, thrown as it were anywhere, and allowed to remain where they fell. Another peculiarity of the English Government is also traceable here. There is never much hesitation in spending as many thousand pounds as may be desired, if it is wished to build a High Court or a museum, &c., but if it is desirable to place an arsenal in a safe place, or erect fortifications, without which the High Court may be turned into a magazine, and the museum into barracks, for our enemies, not a penny is forthcoming.

It has long been to me a source of wonder, what reasons can induce the Government of India to keep one of their most important military arsenals in such an exposed position as that at Bombay occupies. Clearly, in the old days the arsenal was established here simply for the reason that it was the first place we came to on that side of India; but since that time centuries have passed away, yet here it remains still. If the site of an arsenal ought to be selected on the same grounds as those on which you would look for the position of a retail sugar establishment, no doubt the Bombay Arsenal is in that respect perfectly situated; but on military grounds it is quite indefensible.

Before leaving Bombay, I had determined to go to Booshuhr, and thence ride up by Teheran to the Caspian, and through Russia to England; I therefore wrote to my friend, Major Bates, to meet me at Moscow, proposing that we should do the Nijni Novgorod fair and

the Russian autumn manœuvres together, and reach England in September or October.

Therefore, buying a few things that would be useful in my ride through Persia, I left Bombay on the 26th of March, 1875. The next place I came to was Kurrachee, regarding which there is nothing very remarkable to record, and if there was, no doubt the same would have been chronicled long ago. I went on shore, however, for to me any bit of land is preferable to any bit of sea. The hack carriages here are the best I have seen for a long time, and the shops are the worst. I visited one of these, kept by Budgett and Hughes, and after asking in vain for everything I wanted, or fancied I wanted, without success, I was driven to perpetrate the following execrable pun: "Well, sir, if this is all the display you can make, I am afraid you will have to make a good many hews on the credulity of the public before your budget will much improve." Luckily, the man being a Scotch assistant, of course did not understand the joke, and I had no trepanning instrument with me.

There is one peculiar custom in Kurrachee, which my friends in India who about this time begin to sigh for a breath of wind, will think rather odd. There is always a most delicious sea breeze here, and one would imagine that every house would be opened so as to let its invigorating breath blow right through. But no, whether the residents think it would have too exhilarating an effect on them or not I cannot say, but every single house I noticed was closely shut up by a very close trellis work, which probably lets only about one-eighth of the breeze enter.

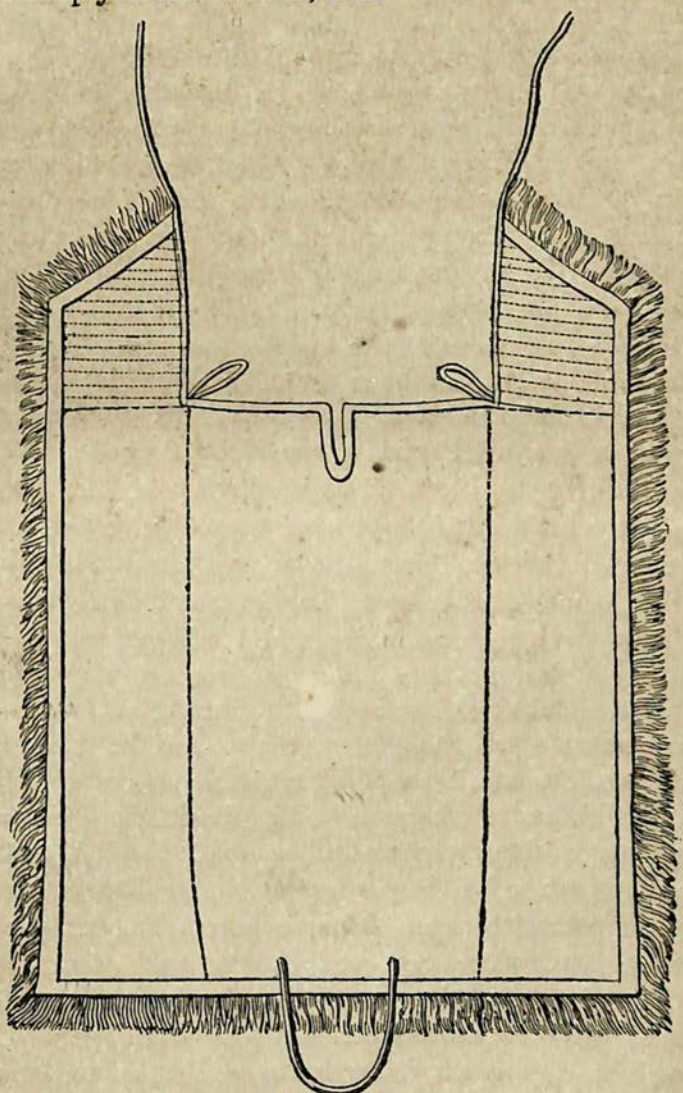
Board ship to me is always most depressing, not altogether because I am a bad sailor, but that the monotony of the life is so killing. One's miseries begin before dawn

even. Just as you are getting off into your only sleep, the officer on watch takes a fiendish delight in sousing the whole deck; and even if you are not wetted, you are kept in constant fear till all sleep vanishes. Then comes the waiting for your tub for half an hour in an atmosphere of steamy stewards, bilge water and dirty oil. Then the rush down to breakfast, where as a matter of duty rather than of pleasure you endeavour to swallow 'twice laid,' or some other of those delectable dishes in which sea cooks delight. Then the long day before you, lolling in an easy chair, trying to read, or write, or sleep, and failing in all, either because of the heat, the row, or the feeling that your stomach is dangling high up in the air, the lunch of hard biscuit, sardines, yellow-cheese, stale oranges; the dinner of—ugh! At last comes night, and, though the bliss of having got over one day is somewhat alloyed by the doubt whether that big snob Jones has not intentions on your best sleeping-place, which a long course of P. and O. tells you is one of two places where you are least likely to get the hose in your eye at 4 A.M., it is still always pleasant to see the hated sea disappear from your sight.—But most of my readers know this sort of thing by heart, yet on the trip to the Persian Gulf, I had it all without any of the alleviations obtainable in the P. and O. No one to talk to, no one to get kranky with, or to throw bits of rope with, all by myself, none but my own sad thoughts to keep me company.—For did I not know that the eye that used to look lighter on my coming, will never welcome me more? On the other side of this interminable waste of water there is only the grave of all my happiness; so that in truth I felt as if the very sap had been taken out of my future that once was full of high ambition and bright hopes.

Muskat was the first place, after leaving Kurrachee, at which we touched. It is, I must say, like my friend J——— the oddest little cove I have seen. It is situated at the foot of some bare, burnt up hills, on a piece of level ground so small that no space whatever is left between it and the sea. The houses are built of white stone and are all flat-roofed; the streets are very narrow but, for the East, are cool and clean. On both sides of the town, perched on hills which completely command it, are tumbledown fortlets, and on every little peak all round are small towers. The harbour is small but good, being sheltered from most winds. It is a place of no strength at present, but might, I should say, easily be made strong if money were forthcoming. The Syad Toorkee (Imam, or Sooltan as he is called by Europeans) is an old man, well disposed to us, as we let him alone and do more for him than he deserves; but probably better disposed to his ragged countrymen though they do *not* leave him alone and do less for him than he deserves. Though Muskat is a chief place in Arabia, there are comparatively very few Arabs in it, the population being composed principally of Africans, Khojahs, and Hindoos.

At Muskat we maintain a political agent, at a considerable cost I suppose. It does seem a little odd, that, while other places are crying out under the pruning knife, such berths as these should escape notice. I would not for an instant insinuate that the Political Agent does nothing, for I am sure he does all that he is wished to do; but if all this were left undone, if the money getting Hindoo were left to run his own risks in sniffing after gold, if the Syad were let alone to manage things his own way, how much worse off should we be? The place has very little trade, and

that little is decreasing, and will continue to diminish. So it simply comes to this, that in order that a few fat



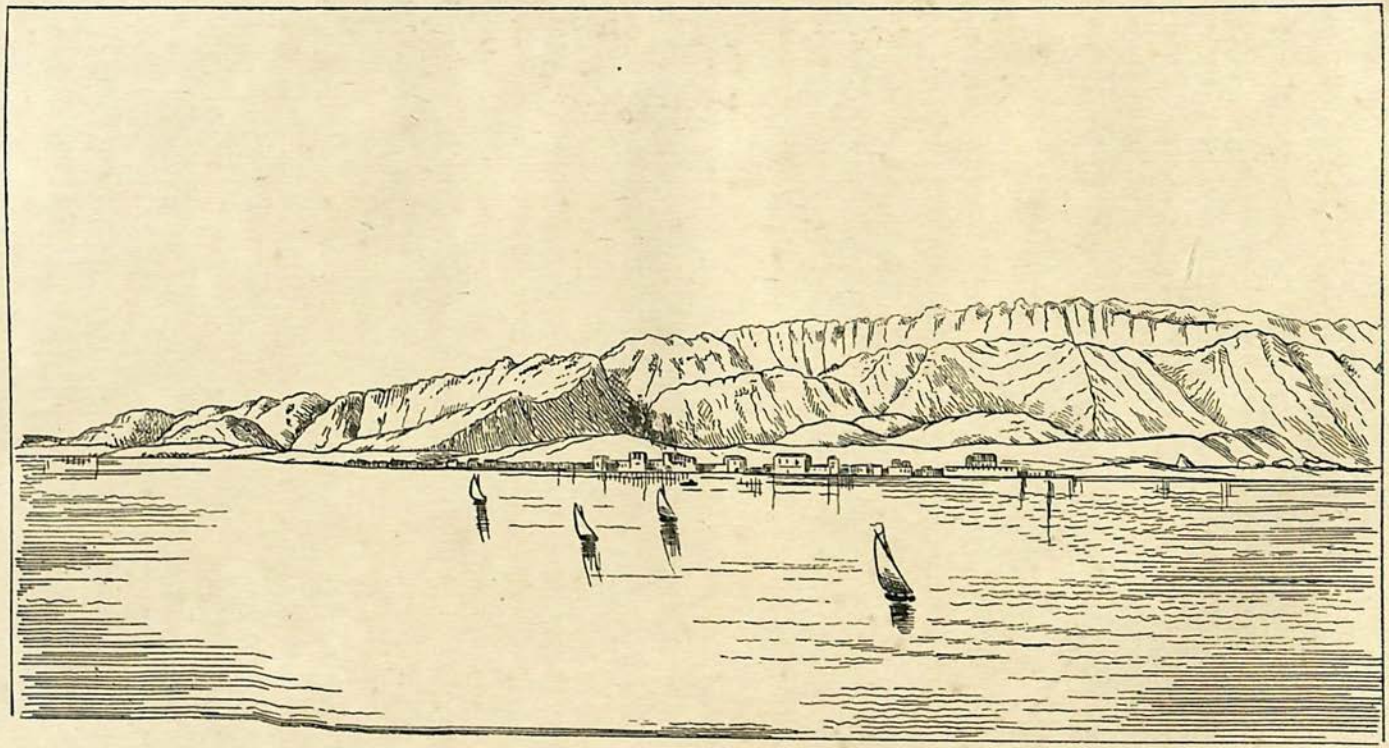
TURKMAN JHOOL.

Goojeratees may make their 100 per cent. profit,

without the chance of having their throats cut, we keep up an expensive establishment on this burned up rock.

From Muskat we went to Bundur Abbass, a desolate looking-place situated on the sea-shore in the position most calculated to prevent it from getting a breath of air; that is along the south slope of a low ridge, which runs parallel to the coast. The houses are all flat-roofed, built of stone and mud, and there are a great many reed huts scattered about. The water supply is not very good, the best coming from the village of Nabund, two miles to the east.

There is no harbour here, and ships are often unable to take in cargo for days together. The place however, has, for Persia, a considerable trade, which is more likely to increase than decrease. The imports consist chiefly of piece-goods, sugar, tea, and crockery, nearly all imported from Bombay, though they might better come direct from England. The exports are carpets, wool, tobacco, saffron, almonds, opium, madder, asafœtida, &c. There seems no reason why English articles should not, through Bundur Abbass, command the market of all the places to the east of Yuzd, viz., Kirman, Tubbus, Toon, Birjund, Kaeen, Seestan, Herat, Mushudd, and Nishapoor. Why it does not do so at present, is due to the supineness of English traders, for it ought to be simply impossible for Russian trade to compete with them. The roads from Bundur Abbass to all these places are good; indeed, with the exception of a few miles near Ahmudee, they could be made with very little difficulty quite practicable for wheeled carriages, and it seems to me that before thinking of a railway in Persia, it would be better to venture on this smaller effort. Roads for wheeled carriages



I.

BUNDUR ABBASS.

[*To face page* 8.

could be made right up to Mushudd for one-hundredth part of the cost of a railway, There are, however great, drawbacks to Bundur Abbass. The first is the great heat. In regard to this I may remark that, as only people would go there who wished to trade, they need not be pitied. The second is the want of a harbour. One certainly could not be provided here without an expense far outweighing the advantages; but luckily the existence of one in the island of Ormuz, twelve miles south-east, provides for this. Here there is a harbour with an excellent anchorage, where a vessel may be sheltered from all winds within half a mile of the shore. If the port were transferred to this place, the land journey from Meenab would only be very little longer, and goods could be shipped and landed at all seasons. I therefore commend this question to those of my countrymen who wish to make money.

From this place there is a road to Azeezabad, distant about 250 miles, whence is Goldsmid's route to Seistan, which is notable as being probably the shortest line from the sea-coast to Herat. Meenab, too, offers some advantages as a base for operations over Bundur Abbass; it is healthy it has abundance of good water, the road is better, and it is seventeen miles nearer to Ormuz, which is a good harbour for transports. Beyond Azeezabad to Lash is about 350 miles, and from Lash to Herat, about 260, so that the total distance to Herat is about 860 miles.

Linga, the next place we touched at, is built of mud and stone, with flat roofs, and many reed huts; it lies between a long low ridge and the beach, and is a place of no strength whatever. The water here is good, and there are a large number of date-trees in the vicinity. Thence there is a road to Lar. Notwithstanding its

name, it certainly is not a place to linger at one moment longer than can be helped.

Unfortunately, there is here an individual who is so impressed with the importance of the $2\frac{1}{2}$ letters which he dignifies by the name of "the mail" that he is of a different opinion, and the steamers are sometimes kept hours here, for a purpose which could generally be performed, if necessary at all, without even anchoring.

But the delays of the British Indian Steam Navigation Company in their voyages up the Gulf are beyond belief. The distance from Bombay to Busrah is 2,234 miles, yet they take sixteen days to do it in, which is under six miles an hour. "Slow and sure" should be the motto of the Company, for though the pace of the steamers is very aggravating to the passenger, there is no doubt that the whole management of the Company is eminently sure. The history of the Company, too, shows that this motto has been acted upon in the management, by the canny Scotchman who started it. Commencing with, I believe, only one ship, which ran between Calcutta and Burmah, the Company now has fifty-four steamers, of a total tonnage of 75,000 tons, with operations extending over 24,000 miles of ocean, and visiting ninety ports, and—best test of prosperity of all—their shares cannot be bought.

Having lingered a sufficient time to please the official in charge of this rising roadstead, we sailed, and reached Booshuhr in the early morning.

There is nothing much worth saying about Booshuhr, except that it is an eminently uninteresting place. The morning we arrived being very clear and bright, the town seemed rather pretty from the anchorage, but I suspect one's opinions are a good deal influenced by the feeling which makes a bad sailor, like myself, think any land

more lovely than a restless interminable sea. We all know that our ideas about men, women, and things in general are affected by the state of our digestions, and our opinions of scenery are very much influenced by the frame of mind in which the observer may happen to be. For instance, many is the time I have, after wandering for days among the desolate hills and burnt valleys on the Derajat frontier, come on a little patch of green corn, with a few huts and half dozen trees, and for the first few seconds thought the spot almost too lovely; and so I suspect my assertion that Booshuhr is rather pretty was caused a good deal by my delight at getting on shore. The houses of Booshuhr are all flat-roofed, built of a white friable sandstone, and whether large or small are all of the same plan, without any vain striving after architectural beauty. The only characteristic feature of the place is the number of windtowers (badgeers) scattered all about it. These are square, 15 to 20 feet high, built on the tops of the principal houses, and open on all sides for the purpose of catching every breath of wind. The streets are as narrow as usual in the East, and though dirty are not worse than were many Indian towns before the days of Sanitary Commissioners. In an Eastern town there is, I think, an advantage in narrow streets, as they are always cooler for passers-by, as well as for the occupants of the houses. The Booshuhr bazaar is certainly not much of a place, but its being covered in gives it a great advantage over the broad open glaring streets which it is our delight to introduce wherever we can in Indian towns, forgetting it is not widening that is most required. In fact, if the ordinary conveyances of the country can pass each other in a street, more is lost by introducing heat and glare than is gained by greater convenience for passing.

Although Colonel Ross the Resident had gone into the interior, and I could not therefore enjoy the pleasure of his society, he had left behind him, as it were, the spirit of his hospitality. Indeed, in the kindly note which the pilot brought on board, and in the horse and servant waiting me at the landing-place, there was an instant promise of hospitality, which the sequel more than fulfilled. In this one respect at least the East is far superior to the West; and there is such a charm, both in the receiving and dispensing the open-handed and open-hearted kindness yet so common all over India, that one may well wish that the coldness and exclusiveness of the West, with its monster hotels, may long remain far from us. Alas! this is but an idle dream, for in the multitude of touts who assail one immediately on landing in Bombay, there is a warning that the real Indian hospitality will soon be a thing of the past. It is not for me to offer an opinion as to the public qualifications of Mr. Edwards, the assistant to the Resident, but I must say, no one could have surpassed him in kindness and attention.

There are two things which always strike me very forcibly in every Asiatic town I see out of India, viz:—the happy condition of the slaves, and the freedom of the women. I do not want to argue with any one whose hobby the abolition of the slave trade all over the world may be; but if there is any good at all in a traveller's recording his experiences, he surely should say what he finds; and one of the things I have found to be very much misunderstood by Englishmen, is slavery in the East. Of course, arguing from his own untutored feelings, an average Englishman who has never been out of Europe, must consider it very dreadful for a slave to be torn from his home, and then sold

like an animal to the highest bidder. But this is only looking at the picture from one point of view. There is no doubt a great deal of cruelty practised on a slave from the moment of his capture to that of his sale; but with that moment his miseries may be said almost to end. Certainly he leaves his own home, in a land where the thermometer never goes below 100°, where clothes are unknown, and where a man need never go supperless to bed as long as he has a weaker brother near him; but then he comes to a country where the houses are to him as palaces; where, as far as he can see, for an African is the nearest approach to an animal I know of among human beings, there is all that man can want. To his idea he is sumptuously fed, without fearing lest any resultant plumpness should cause others to cast longing eyes on him; he has more clothes than the kings of his own country; he is well treated, and he is taught a religion which to his sensual idea is bliss, and I doubt very much if one man in a thousand after five years of such slavery would go back to freedom. This with the men even; in the case of women their state is even more improved, and their charms far more appreciated than in their own country.

With regard to the freedom of women, it seems to me equally a mistake to look on the women of the East as poor helpless beings, whose whole existence is spent in satisfying the lusts of sensual and jealous husbands, for which purpose they are immured all their lives between four walls with no opportunity of ever seeing the world. On the contrary, except in India, where their state is worse than anywhere else, women may and do go about as much almost as they require; they may go to the mosque, to the bath, &c., or call on their friends, with quite as much freedom as their sisters of

the West, and in these walks they may and do see as much or even more of the world, and especially of that portion of it against whose sight they are so jealously guarded. This being the case, the continuance of the custom of so closely veiling their women, seems to me on the part of the men of Mahomedan countries a great blunder, for no costume or custom could possibly be invented that would give an "intriguante" better opportunities for evading a jealous husband than the huge sheets which they wear. Anyway, I do not think the women are to be pitied, because I cannot believe that if they were really anxious to break through the custom of veiling, that the men could or would withstand them. I think it is far more likely that they see in the huge cloaks in which they shroud themselves, far greater freedom than they could ever hope to attain by the adoption of Western customs.

I only stayed long enough in Booshuhr to enable arrangements to be made for my journey to Sheeraz, and started after a couple of days. The road to Sheeraz has been so often, and in some cases, especially by Colonel Taylor, so well described, that there remains very little to say about it. It leaves the town and proceeds over an expanse of hard sand which gradually becomes more and more wet, and it is necessary to be very careful in following the track, or else to have a guide; as off the road, one might very soon get into a quicksand. The part that goes over the moist ground would be very heavy travelling for guns, but it is certainly practicable for them. It reminds me much of the ground about Pehtang in China. The best place to stop at on the first day is Ahmadee, where there is an excellent serai, though the water is brackish and many supplies are not procurable. From Ahmadee,

the road leads over an open plain with occasional patches of cultivation and very few trees, but with fine grazing as far as Khooshab, when the country undulates more. This village is situated on rising ground, and is the scene of the fight in February 1857, when Sir James Outram's force retiring on Booshuhr was surprised by the Persians. On this occasion the 3rd Bombay Cavalry greatly distinguished themselves. The country is open and well adapted to the movements of cavalry.

Beyond Khooshab, and as Boorazjoon is approached, a dense forest of date trees is passed which quite hides the latter place from view. It is a town of a certain amount of importance, but has been almost ruined by the famine, having now only 1,500 souls left out of a population of 6,000. There is a telegraph station here, where I was kindly put up by the officer in charge, and a fine caranavserai is being built at a charge on the Government, I was told, of 80,000 Krans,* a fact which shows that the contractor must be a man of confidence. The village is not a place of strength, being commanded by hills to the east, which would be the best direction from which to approach, owing to the close confined nature of the country on the side of the high road.

From Boorazjoon to Dulukkee the road goes over a succession of undulations which are the underfeatures of the hills to the right. The country, which reminds me very much of Meerunzai in the Kohat district, is almost uninhabited, though affording very fine grazing. On nearing Dulukkee one goes through marshy ground, which is caused by naphtha springs on the hills to the right. The whole air is impregnated with the fetid smell of this mineral, and is quite uncultivable.

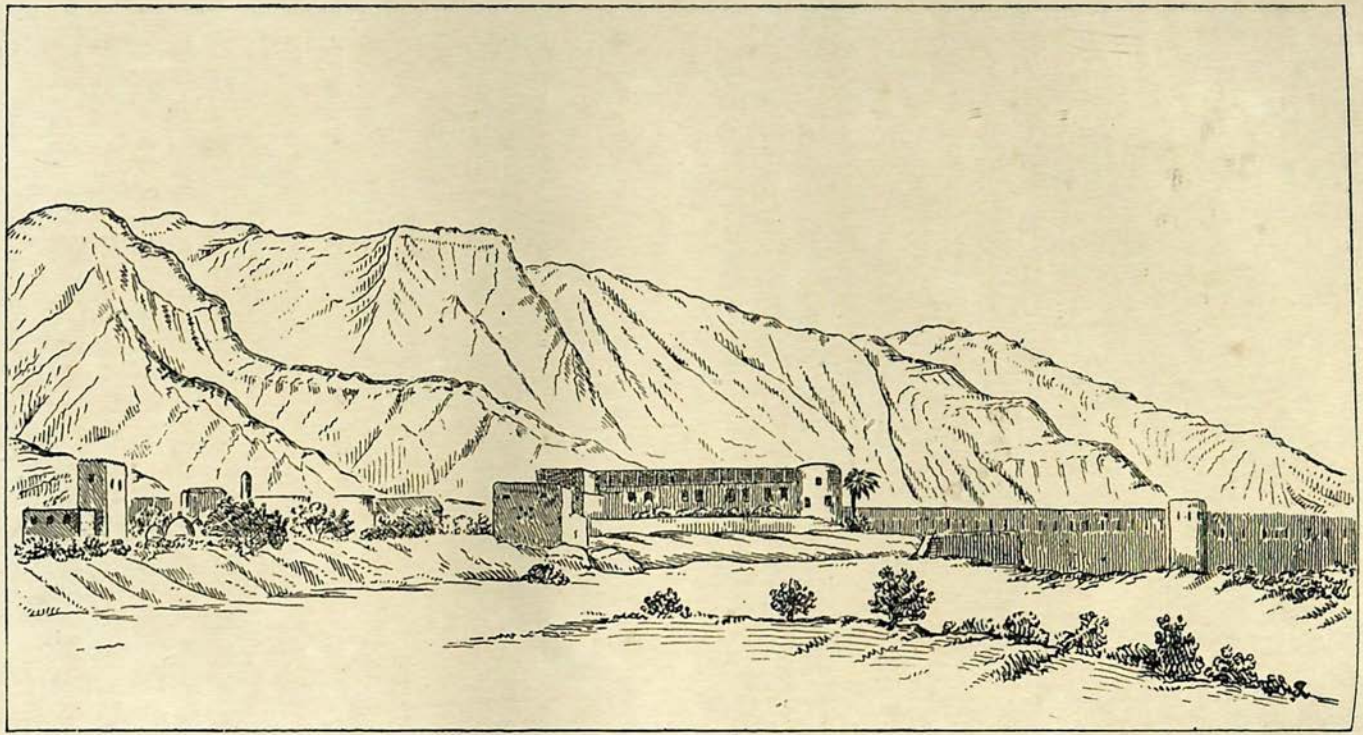
* A sum equivalent to about £3,500, the Kran being worth about 10½d.

Dulukkee is a small village at the foot of the hills, where the plain country ends. Up to this point the road is practicable in its present state for artillery. The serai at this place being extremely filthy, I was indebted to an old lady for the use of an upper room in her house.

Near Dulukkee there is a very large date plantation, which stretches for two miles or more to the north. There is plenty of ground for the encampment of a large force near the village. Dulukkee boasts a miserable enclosure which is dignified by the name of the "Kullah," but the whole place is commanded at easy range by a ridge on the east and on the south.

In the evening I got a sketch of the place, and after a walk up to the foot of the hills whence comes the water supply, I sat out on the roof and then took a stroll up and down. Before I had made many turns, however, I was accosted by a rough voice, which said, "What do you want here, overlooking our women?" I looked and saw a wild-looking gentleman gesticulating furiously, and though I had not the faintest idea of looking at his women, and would liked much to tell him that they were too ugly to be worth looking at, I thought it best not to raise an altercation, and so discreetly retired. I passed large numbers of excellent mules and donkeys on the way out from Booshuhr, with rough but very serviceable-looking equipments and fine hardy muleteers.

From Dulukkee the road winds round the hills and at one mile there is an ascent over a very nasty hill of shelving rock. It then enters a narrow rocky gorge for about three miles to the bank of the Rohilla river, which it crosses eventually at about the sixth mile by an excellent stone bridge of six arches. The road



1. DALAKI, OR DULUKKEE, FROM NORTH. [*To face page 16.*

then winds round the hills over the river to the foot of the Kotul-y-Maloo which is frightfully steep. Except the last half mile or so of this pass, the road could all be made practicable for field artillery. This would be a bit of work which would indeed put sappers and gunners on their metal, but it would not be too much, I think, to expect English officers to get over these difficulties. The pass is commanded the whole way up by an elevated ridge of rock to the left, which affords a very strong position and it would be absolutely necessary to get possession of this before attempting the pass in the face of an enemy.

After the pass is surmounted, the road is pretty level into Koonartukhteh. This is a wretched village in the Khisht valley, which has an elevation of about 1,800 feet. There is a capital serai here, and the telegraph office is situated a little to the north. The plain would be a good position for the depôt of a force advancing against Sheeraz as there is good grazing round, in the spring, and some supplies might be looked for from the villages of Khisht.

From Koonartukhteh, the road goes through the valley to its end and then along the banks of the Rohilla river, leaving which it enters the hills and leads to the Kotul-y-Koomary, another very difficult pass most thoroughly commanded throughout. This pass could not be forced, in the face of opposition; but I ascertained that, like most mountain passes, it admits of being turned by light Infantry. I hardly think guns could be got up; speaking as a traveller I should say certainly not; but I know that British gunners are not apt to shy at difficulties which might appal those of inferior nations. I think it might be managed with the help of Infantry. Elephants certainly could get up, but as

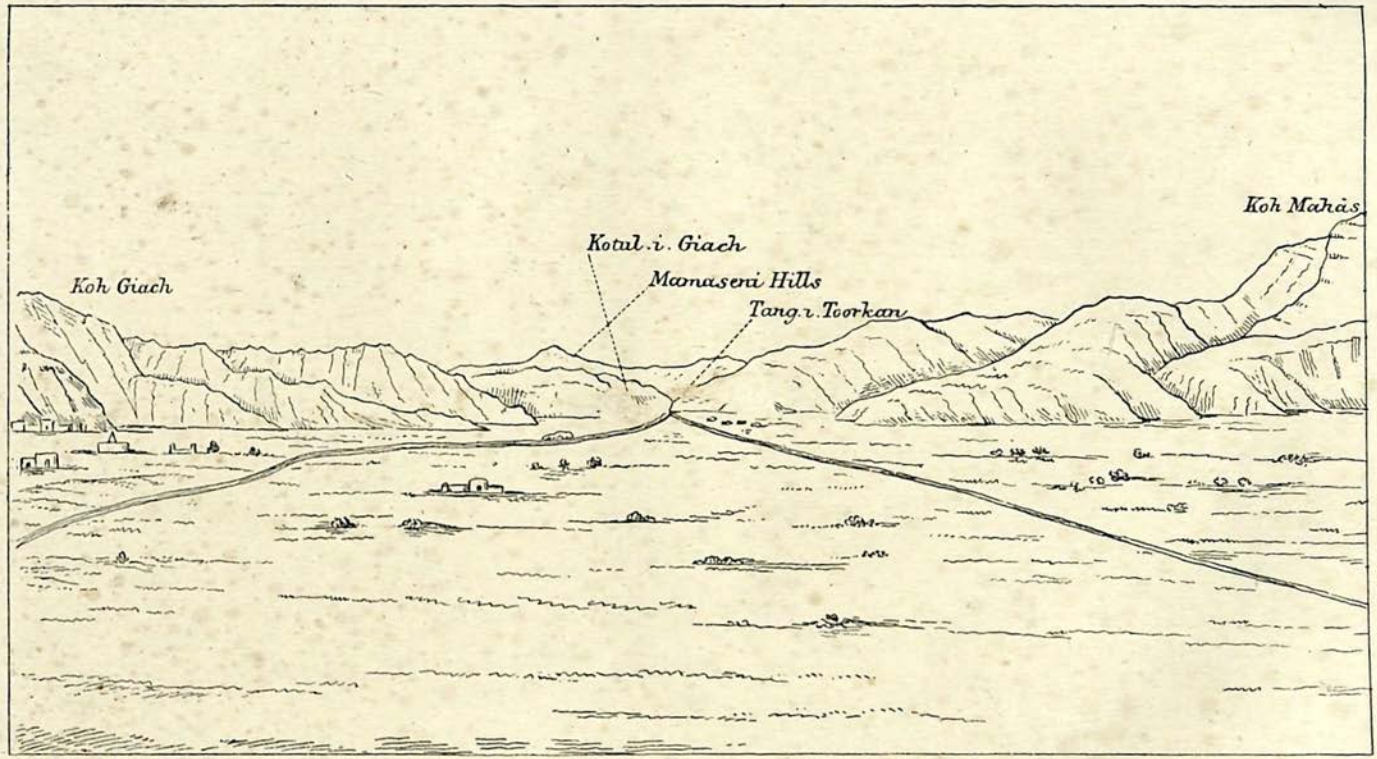
it is exceedingly narrow and on this account dangerous, care would have to be taken to prevent any animals coming down while others were going up. This could easily be arranged, as there are splendid positions for signalling all up the pass. The Koomary plain, another plain like Koonartukhteh, is about four miles long, very green, surrounded by bare almost impracticable hills on all sides. There is plenty of room in it for encamping a large force.

I was quartered here in a nice clean private house, the owner of which was excessively polite, and insisted on vacating a very comfortable upper room for me. In the evening he paid me a visit, and we had such conversation as my limited knowledge of Persian permitted of. He informed me there was no fear of robbers now, as the arrival of the Hissam-oo-Sooltan as Governor of Fars had struck terror into the banditti.

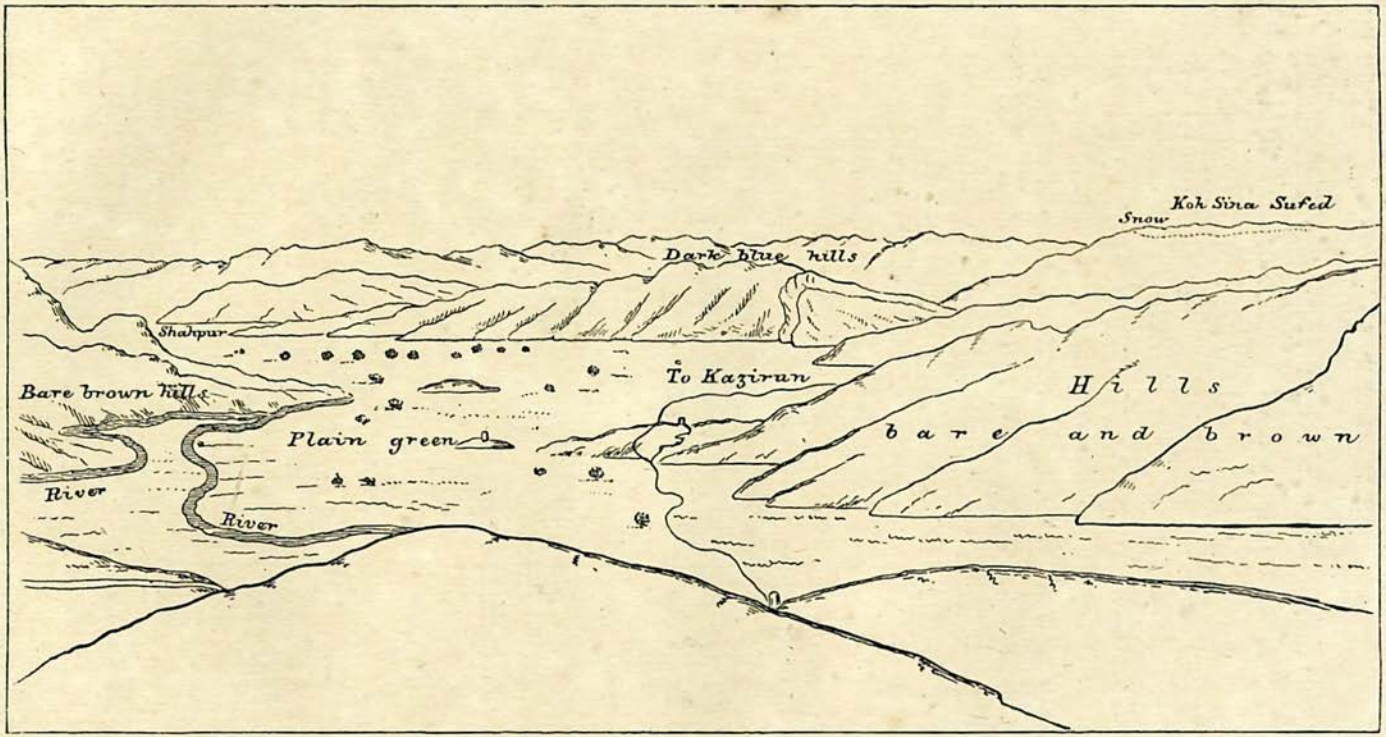
The hill to the east of Koomary is called the Koo-y-Mahas. The Tung-y-Toorkan bears 18° from the village. The best road from this to Kaziroon is by the Tung-y-Giach, which though a little longer, can be more quickly traversed. There is a path which goes over the Koo-y-Mahas, which is the shortest route of all, but it is not practicable for animals. There is a good well under the hill to the SW. close to the Khet Khoda's* house. The responsibility of the headman of this village extends from the foot of the Kotul-y-Koomary to the far side of the Tung-y-Toorkan.

The old road out of this little valley goes by the Tung-y-Toorkan, but this is now in such a bad state that even the Persians have had the energy to take a new line over the hill to the left, which is quite practicable and could be much improved. From the top of

* Headman of a village.



I. PLAIN OF KOOMARY, LOOKING TOWARDS THE TUNG-Y-TOORKAN. [*To face page* 18.



I. PLAIN OF SHAHPOOR, FROM THE TOP OF THE GEEACH PASS. [*To face page* 19.

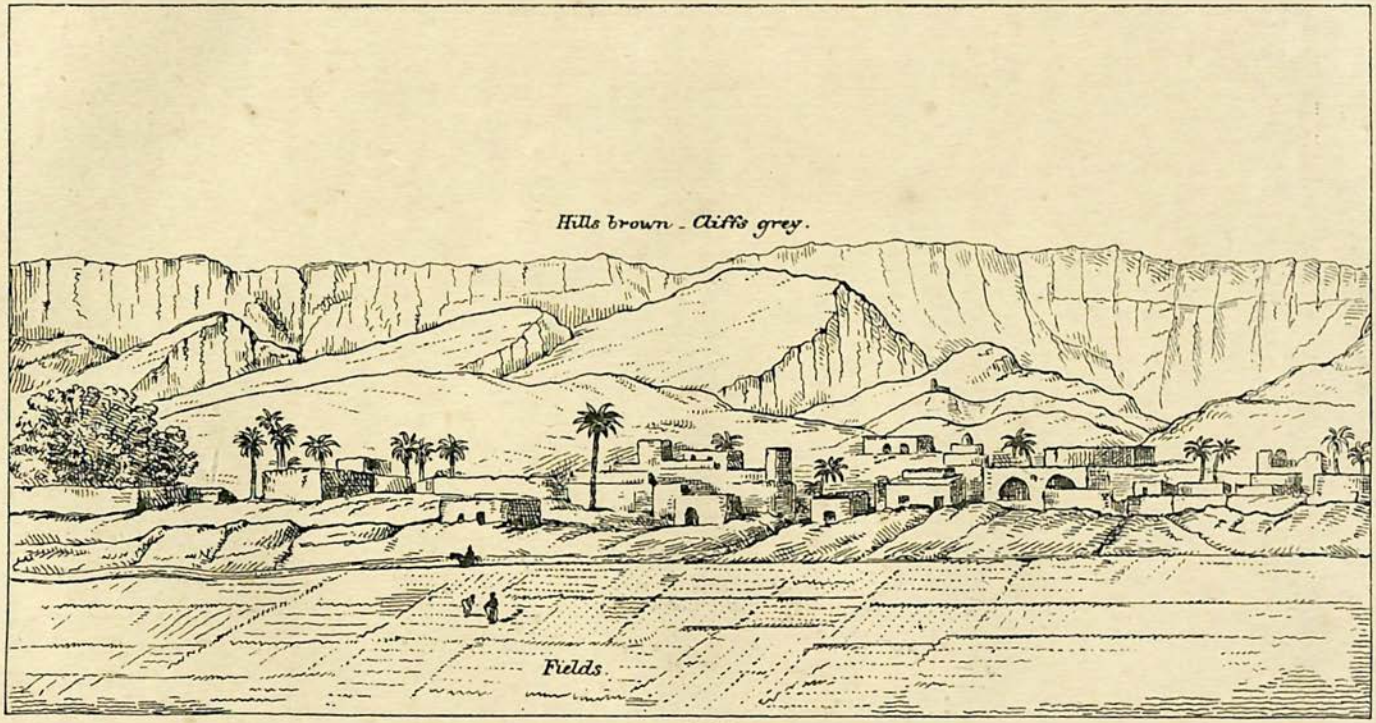
this pass, called the Kotul-y-Geeach, there is a fine view of the Shahpoor plain (of which I got a sketch), which does not differ much in appearance from the other plains passed on this road. Just beyond where the road through the defile and that over the pass I adopted join, there is a small pass which I was informed was the place where Captain Napier's baggage was plundered last year. It is very odd, but as I was coming to it, I thought what a nice spot it would be for such a purpose. I suppose this shows that the cateran blood of my family is still in me, and makes me vain enough to think I might have succeeded in the old days in being a thorn in the side of the Campbells and "such-like varmint." After this pass you enter the Kaziroon plain, the road being then level but very stony the whole way in.

At Kaziroon I was most hospitably entertained by an Armenian gentleman, Mr. Malcolm of the telegraph. The climate here in this time of the year is most delicious, much cooler than in India. In fact, the same may be said of every place I have yet come to in Persia, not excepting Booshuhr. It would be very warm work marching at this season in almost any part of India, but here, though it is hottish in the sun, it is quite delightful in the shade, and at night the temperature is simply charming. Mr. Malcolm lives in a house (built by the Persian Government for the telegraph) which has (what I always consider such a pleasant feature in eastern houses) a court-yard screened from the sun, with a nice basin of water in the centre and some orange trees planted round. I have never understood why no one has yet introduced this plan of house into India. There the habit is either to be out in the sun, or shut up in a dark room. I believe this causes a

great deal of ennui and sickness which might be avoided by the change to a pleasant little yard outside.

In addition to this suggestion, I would commend to the notice of my fellow grillers in India, the "Badgeer," or wind tower of Persia, as well as the Surd Khana or underground room of Bagdad, which are both well worthy of more general introduction into India. Kaziroon is not a pretty place, but has much to recommend it in its coolness, its good water, and its fruit. It was formerly a much larger place, having, it is said, once had 3,000 houses, but of these only 1,000 are now inhabited. I asked one Hadjee Abool Hussun, a merchant of the place, about the famine. His account was very frightful; over 1,000 souls, he said, had died in Kaziroon alone, and no attempt whatever had been made to help the wretched people. When I told him that I had been employed in the Bengal famine, and though only part of the rice sent up for relief passed through my hands, yet I had sent up 75 krools of maunds of rice; or, to bring it more home to him, 250,000 mule loads, I could see a smile of disbelief come over his features, and he looked at his son as much as to say, "Good gracious, this man *is* a liar!" so he capped my story by saying that there were ninety million people in Persia. When I asked where they were, remarking that I had come 100 miles into the country, and certainly had not seen 1,000 people, he replied without a moment's hesitation, "Oh, they are moving about." I should think they must be, and moving so fast as to be invisible, only I did not say so.

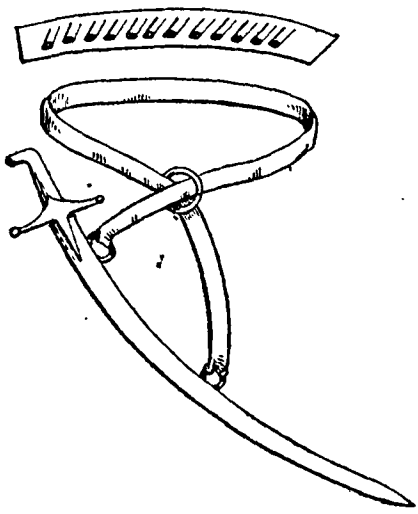
There is very excellent grazing in this valley, and a considerable number of excellent mules and Galloways are bred in it, in fact it is the home of most of the



I. KAZIROON. [*To face page* 21.

muleteers round. During the Abyssinian, campaign many mules were purchased here and high prices given, so much so, that it is said one native gentleman has been enabled to live in affluence ever since on the proceeds of his dealings with our agent. The proper price for a mule, is from 80 to 150 Rupees, and from inquiries I made, I should say that 3,000 to 4,000 might be collected in this neighbourhood.

Kaziroon, it is said, is properly Gaziroon, from Gazir,



a washerman, the place being said to have been once famous for its washing, or the home of people of this occupation.

The valley of Kaziroon is so strewn with ruins as to show that its population must have been much larger formerly. There are said to be 1,000 inhabited houses in this town, containing say, 5,000 souls, and 1,700 uninhabited, which is about the usual proportion throughout Persia. There is a Governor here, also a

Telegraph Office, and a pretty orange garden called, Bagh Nasur, where there are rooms sometimes made available for travellers.

Kaziroon is celebrated for the manufacture of the Persian shoes called "maleki." They are very strong, light and easy, and prove beyond doubt, that leather is not the only, if it is even the best material, out of which shoes can be made. The uppers of these are made of white ribbed cotton cloth, and the soles of old rags pressed together, only the toe and heel being tipped with a few strips of raw hide. They cost from one kran* for a common pair, to five for the best, and are used by all the inhabitants of Fars, and the soldiers of Persia generally. The soles are very broad, and the uppers are most soft and comfortable, and though always used on the most trying roads for shoes I have ever seen, they last a long time. They seem to me just the shoe for India, the climate of which is quite unsuited to the hard black boots served out to our soldiers. If these shoes were introduced into India, there would be an almost complete cessation of sore feet, and I should say the power of our infantry might, in the important item of marching, be increased 20 per cent. by their adoption.

The people one meets in these parts generally, do not go about armed, though one always meets a proportion of them with inferior matchlocks. They never seem to carry a sword, a proof, I suppose, that close quarters is not much to their taste; it would therefore only be a useless encumbrance. The men one sees about are not large, but they seem very wiry and have very pleasant features. The fact that the people, as a rule, are not armed, shows that blood feuds are not so common as amongst other Asiatics, notably the

* About 10½d.

Afghans. There are robbers of course, but these appear, as a rule, to confine their attention to Kafilahs.*

From Kaziroon the road goes along the valley for some eight miles, when it turns up towards the Kotuly-Doochtur Pass. This pass rises about 500 feet in two miles, and it is all built up with retaining walls. The gradients, however, are as a rule not severe for hills, and I daresay when the paving was first put down the roadway was good enough; but now, the lime having been broken away, the road is simply execrable. Nevertheless, I am inclined to think the difficulties of this pass have been exaggerated, and I should say that a determined leader would get guns up. It is not as bad as some of the passes in Abyssinia, notably the ascents out of the Takazze and Bashilo rivers, nor is it as long or as steep as the Chandrageeree Pass into Nipal, or anything like as hard as some bits of road in Bhotan. It wants smoothing more than anything else at present. The heights above, however, afford an exceedingly strong position, as they command the pass so completely that stones can be thrown from the top of any part of it on to the roadway; yet as the hills to the right and left are certainly practicable for light infantry, a general who understood mountain warfare would not break his head against this pass, but cause its evacuation by a turning operation.

After surmounting this pass you still ascend slightly to another pass, when you descend into the plain of Dusht-i-Beer. At the commencement of this plain is one of the covered water tanks (ab-ambar) so common in Persia, and as I had been much delayed in sketching the pass, I took advantage of this one to stop and have breakfast. The water in the tank was deliciously cool,

* Caravans.

and though not very clear, it was very well tasted. The provision of these tanks is a real boon to travellers, to whom a drink of cool water after surmounting the cruel ascent of the Daughter's pass, seems like a gift from heaven. I have never seen anything of the kind in India, and though charitable folks are not wanting there to erect platforms and plant shady trees near springs, I think it would be a great advantage if a hint were taken from these "ab-ambars" of Persia.

The Dusht-i-Beer is described by one traveller as containing a lovely forest of fine oak trees; all I can say, I suppose that these fine oaks were so pleased with this description of themselves that they must have given up being fine any longer. Anyway, they are now very stunted specimens, though still offering a grateful shade.

The Dusht-i-Beer is bounded on the north by the Peerzun range, and on the south by a very curious ridge which rises abruptly at an angle of 45°, overlooks the Daria Pareshan Lake and drains to the east. There is one village, called Abdooee, in it, and it has good grazing and lots of fuel. It is doubtful if sufficient water can be found, otherwise it would be better for a force to halt here, as there is not sufficient room at Meean Kotul, the next stage.

The Daria-i-Pareshan is a lake in the Kaziroon valley, situated about eight miles SW. of Kaziroon. It is not clear whether it is salt or not, but it receives the drainage of the Kaziroon valley. Whether it has any outlet to the east is not known. It is a long narrow sheet of water stretching NE. and SW. The village of Famoor is situated at its SE. extremity, and there is excellent grazing on its banks.

From this little valley you again go up another pass, this time named after an old woman, the Peerzun, but

whether any connection of the impracticable "daughter" we had just negotiated I do not know. The Peerzun pass is not so steep as the other passes on this route, but the large loose stones make it, if possible, more disagreeable, and induce one to be glad at arriving even at Meean Kotul, a fine serai in an uninteresting situation, where nothing is procurable.

Colonel Pelly thinks this place might suit for the depôt of a force advancing on Sheeraz, but I hardly agree with him. The climate might certainly suit, but I think it would never do to encamp any force here. There are no supplies, no room, and it is commanded by the hills above; besides, the whole place is so filthily dirty that it would probably prove unhealthy even after it had been cleansed.

Going on from this place to the top of the pass, I was detained a long time by strings of donkeys, I should say 1,500 must have passed. They are a feature in Persia, and bear a very large share of the traffic. They carry wonderful loads, from 20 to 25 mauns, or about 150 to 200 pounds, and go along very steadily. They are fitted with very rough pads and there seems to be no care taken of them. A force operating in these parts should certainly not neglect the great aid which could be received from these donkeys; for instance, those I saw to-day could alone have carried food for 7,500 men for fifteen days.

The top of this pass I made out to be 7,650 feet above the sea, though others have only made it 7,400; whoever is right, it is the highest point crossed between Sheeraz and the sea. The air was deliciously cool, and snow was lying on hills only a little higher up. The descent into the Dusht-y-Argun is generally pretty easy, though the stones are very troublesome. This plain is evidently

the bed of a lake, about 7 miles long by 3 to 4 broad, at an elevation of 6,850 feet. At present, and generally in the spring, there is a considerable expanse of water towards the east, but it sometimes dries up altogether, having done so in the famine year.

The valley cannot be called pretty; but after being in danger of breaking either your own neck or your horse's legs for the last twenty miles, one is inclined to be easily pleased with any green bit of turf. Though not strictly beautiful, the lake in one corner, and the beautiful fresh turf surrounded by rugged hills, give it a very pleasing appearance. It is a favourite meet of the wandering tribes in the summer, and is famed for the excellence of its water and pasturage. Till lately also, it formed one of the horse-breeding places of the Prince of Fars; but it has been abandoned, owing to some disease which broke out among the brood mares. The village in this valley is a very wretched place, but there is one point where a splendid spring rushes from the rock that is rather picturesque. No supplies can be got here, but there is some fuel, and abundance of water and grass. It was in the forest above this place that Captain St. John, R.E., had a somewhat unpleasant adventure with a lion, which is graphically described in Vol. II. of "Eastern Persia."

I met here Corporal King, Royal Engineers, of the Persian Telegraph, and he very kindly gave me breakfast. He lives here all by himself, without any guard of any kind, which, considering that Caravans are constantly robbed in the valley, and that it is for part of the year the haunt of tribes with no particular ideas of *meum* and *tuum*, I think is a wonderful instance of reliance on the *Civis Romanus sum* principle. The life of these telegraph subordinates is terribly lonely, and,

though they get very well paid, it seems doubtful whether they like it. He introduced me to a Persian dish which was not half bad. Its name I understood was "Fazanjan," which I immediately translated into "fizzing john." It is supposed to partake of the qualities of matrimony, being a judicious mixture of sweets and bitters. My friend had a nice little library, and seemed to have read a good deal. He was great on politics, and it was quite refreshing to hear the Irish Church question talked about in these outlandish diggings. His great hero in the political world was Lord Salisbury, who, no doubt, will duly appreciate the compliment of being thus remembered on "the Plain of Lions."

There are very few of the men of the Engineers now left in the telegraph in Persia, and only one officer. It seems to be the policy to replace them with civilians, and, I am sure, this is a mistake. I cannot help thinking the day may come when we shall want every soldier who knows anything of this country; and I should have been inclined to favour exactly the opposite policy, viz., that of getting as many soldiers into the country as possible, especially men with a turn for picking up information. The advantage of this may be seen in the case of St. John, who, though hard worked at the telegraph, always found time to pick up fresh items of useful information, and now may be said to know more of Persia than almost any other man living.

Leaving the plain, the road ascends pretty easily to the Seena Soofeyd Pass, which is 7,400 feet above the sea, and from which there is a good view of the Koo-y-Tuskar and the drainage of the Kurghach valley. From this pass the descent is very easy to the Kurghach river,

along the bank of which it continues to the serai of Khoona Zuneean.

While I was at Dusht-y-Argun, my servant came up to say that some passing Persian official had seized the matchlockmen I had with my baggage to go with him. It was rather early for me to plunge into an altercation with a Persian, and so I thought it better to confine myself to the enunciation of a few sentences which I hastily arranged as I went up to him. Question.—"Why do you take my matchlockmen?" Answer in most voluble Persian, nine-tenths of which I could not understand; so I had recourse to sentence No. 2. "They are my men." This also was followed by a volley of rather excited language, and so I let off my last shot, which was looking him in the face. "You shall not take my men!" and thinking it best to give him proof positive of what I meant, I untied them all, one after another, repeating at intervals, "You shall not take my men!" This was successful, and, Persian-like, being defeated in his purpose, he became civil, and assured me that he had taken them because they were "too untrustworthy to go with me."

On this road the provision of these guards has become a regular system of black mail. You have to take matchlockmen with you whether you like it or not, and have to give them a present at the end of their beat, when you are handed over to another equally ragged and untrustworthy set of extortioners.

There is some doubt as to what becomes of the Kurghach or Kara-agatch river, as it has never been followed down below this point. It is believed to flow SE. towards Jahroom, and is certainly the river crossed on the road from Sheeraz to Ferozabad at Kawar; and it was also crossed by Abbott, going from

Darab to Kaziroon, at thirteen and a half miles from Mobarukabad. Beyond this it probably finds its way to the sea, some fifty miles south of Booshuhr, and is, perhaps, the river ascended, in 1874, by Colonel Ross for twelve miles in a boat.

The serai at this place, "Khoona Zuneean," is the best on the road, and is pretty clean, for a wonder. As all the new serais on this road are now built on this plan, I may as well describe them. Caravanserais are nearly always substantial brick and masonry enclosures, sometimes as much as from fifty to seventy yards square. There are rows of cells along the interior of the walls for the accommodation of travellers, and frequently behind these, long dark apartments intended for stables, the whole surmounted by a broad terraced roof. The caravanserais in Irāk are generally larger than those in Fārs, but the latter have often wider terraced roofs, and, therefore, more covered accommodation. Sometimes they have double tiers of rooms, and could shelter a large body of men. Their walls are always more or less flanked by towers at the corners, and the buildings are intended to be defensible. Ordinarily there is only one doorway, which is surmounted by a "bala khana," or upper story, containing two or more good rooms, usually appropriated by the better class of travellers. They are called kárwán-sarai in Persian, the Indian abbreviation, "serai," being unknown in this sense.

There is evidently a good deal of money spent in these serais, but I think the policy should be first to make the roads absolutely safe, then to make them practicable, and lastly to make "sarais," if necessary; and this because while it is evident that travellers can easily arrange for shelter for themselves, it is quite

beyond their power to protect themselves from robbers, or to make the roads.

The road from Khoona Zuneean into Sheeraz is quite good, though it would be all the better for a little clearing of the stones. At the serai of "Chinar Rahdar" I met a horse kindly sent out to me by the British Agent, and I cantered in thence, arriving about 11 A.M. Here I met a hospitable welcome from Colonel and Mrs. Ross, who had left Booshuhr a few days before me, and who were living in a garden called the Bagh-y-Tukht, about a mile north of the town. Eastern travel is all very fine in the abstract, and when looked at through the spectacles of the dim future or the faded past it seems very enjoyable; but even nine days of life among Persians made me appreciate thoroughly the charm of being among one's own people again.

CHAPTER II.

SHEERAZ.

GETTING up in the morning, in such a lovely climate as Sheeraz is at this time of the year, whatever the temperament of the early riser may be, must always afford great pleasure when once he is out. There is then a beauty in nature and an exhilarating freshness in the air that makes one's heart leap within one, and clears away the heaviness which is ever more or less present if the night has been passed between four walls, a ceiling and a floor; and even if a man is of that leaden nature that he cannot appreciate the healthy or the poetic side of the question, he cannot fail to be deeply moved by the sense of superiority which it gives him over his lazier comrades who have been "taking it out" in sleep. But there are times when not the freshness of the morning air, the charm of seeing the sun rise and drive before it the vapours which have hung over the earth throughout the night, nor even the aforesaid feeling of superiority can induce one to turn out, and that is when one has been ruthlessly roused out of the sweet last sleep of the morning for a week past. Such was my case, on the first morning of my arrival at Sheeraz; and, therefore, while I freely acknowledged the superiority of those who rose, I lay still till an hour before breakfast.

Our party, for these parts, was rather a large one, for

though we could not all squeeze into the chambers which had escaped the ruined state of the large house in the Bagh-y-Tukht, practically we were all one party, though it was a sufficiently diversified one. In addition to the Rosses, our hosts, there was an energetic Doctor who had already made himself famous by his rides from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian, and from the Mediterranean back to the former. I know everybody who goes to Persia is almost immediately seized with a fierce longing to "chuppur" quicker than any one else. Therefore, if I said the Doctor had ridden quicker than any one else ever did, I should only be raising up a host of denials, and probably hurting the feelings of many who never injured me, on what to every Anglo-Persian is evidently a very sensitive point. Perhaps, though I have done a good deal of riding in my day, it is because I have never "chuppured" fast myself, that I am a little inclined to smile at the pride of those who have; but even if I do doubt the advantage from most points of view of riding from Ispahan to Tehran in the shortest possible time, there is one thing in this mania for rapid locomotion at the expense of comfort, instruction and leather, which I *do* glory in. Nobody but Englishmen ever do it, a proof to our foreign friends that we are not yet used up.

Then there was a Captain, who was already proving himself one of our best Persian scholars, and who was, I heard afterwards, destined to prove the beauty of our system of education and selection. By the expenditure, no doubt, of much coin, much temper, and great perseverance he had acquired such a knowledge of Elysium Row* Persian as is contemplated in the general order which lays down the standard for high

* The residence in Calcutta of the Board of Examiners.

proficiency, and he had then been transplanted to this country only to find that he was not understood by the Persians. Then setting to work here with the same intelligence and perseverance which had distinguished him before, he acquired the Persian of Sadee and Hafiz, with the variations of the muleteers and the "ferashes;"* only just before the wheel of fate sent him to a country where they talk Hindee!

Another of our companions was an attaché of the Austrian Embassy, who was deeply engaged in the study and acquisition of the curiosities of the country, and the habits of a better half of the people, who interested him much. Next came Mr. Walker, one of the Telegraph officers and a most agreeable man, and then there was a German savant who was acquiring a knowledge of English in the dogged fashion usual with our Teutonic cousins; and lastly, the British Agent, Nawab Mirza Hoosen Alee Khan, who had already a better knowledge of our language than most foreigners I have met. This gentleman, the descendant of an Indian Nawab and a Persian lady of blue blood, was the most English Asiatic it has ever been my good fortune to meet. His present was taken up in studying—regardless of trouble, or his own convenience—how he could best serve not only the British Government, but also all British people; and his future, I think, was a dream of going to London, to see us in our own homes, to complete his knowledge of the people he liked so well, and perchance, pluck from our famed garden of beauty, one little rose to brighten his eastern home.

The house in which we lived was called the Tukht-y-Kujjur, which was placed in the garden called Bagh-y-

* Strictly speaking, carpet-beaters—men servants.

Tukht. The latter must have been a fine one once, but it is now all in decay and the place is almost a jungle. The palace or house must also have been an imposing building, though it is a great deal too meretricious in its ornamentation to please me. It is rather a difficult place to describe. Below is a large tank, now dry and out of order, about 100 yards square, and at each corner is a sort of raised platform, meant, I suppose, for sitting on in the mornings and evenings. Then on the north side there is a series of terraces, divided by a fine row of steps, up to the house, which is placed on a plateau at the top. If one was to pile boxes one on the other so that they should get gradually smaller and smaller, it would give an idea of the effect produced by this singular building. The whole place is in ruins, and out of the whole of it, there were really only two habitable rooms, and these not of any size. There was a huge hall, which was being repaired when we were there, and two wings protruded from each side, which were in a most dangerous state, indeed one actually fell in one day during our stay.

I stayed at Sheeraz nearly a week, during which our time was taken up in visiting the various gardens, roaming through the bazaars, and riding about the valley. The gardens of Sheeraz are very numerous, and as dilapidated as they are numerous; all look *passé*. No doubt once the Bagh-y-Now and the Juhan Nooma were very pleasant places to live in, but to my idea it is impossible to feel quite happy if everything is going to decay around you. I will not therefore try to describe both these gardens, partly because the task has been so well performed by much better scribes than I shall ever be (notably Binning), and partly because nearly all Persian buildings being a mass of ruins, to describe one

is much like the feat of the German philosopher, who from a few bones evolved an interesting lecture on the camel.

The tomb of Hafiz is one of the sights of Sheeraz, which it is almost one's duty to visit. It is situated in a garden close to the town, and the tomb is placed amid a number of others. It is covered with a slab of inferior marble, with an inscription on it. Mahomedans visit the tomb, of course, with feelings of great reverence, and it is a common practice among them to take or try a "fal" or omen from his poems. Europeans often go there with the same view, but shorn of the reverence. The amusement is of the dullest kind, and consists in—after asking a question—opening a copy of the poems at random, and taking the meaning of the page opened as the answer; of course, on the doctrine of chances the answers are sometimes startlingly appropriate, and these go to cover the number of meaningless answers which are received and never mentioned. One of the most appropriate is recorded by Binning. Nadir Shah asked if he would be successful in future; he was answered, "Cathay and Tartary tremble at the glance of thy vivid eyes. China and India must pay you tribute. Thou art in truth the crown of all nobility."

Sheeraz did not impress me with any very great idea of its importance or beauty. It is simply a large village, with no conspicuous public buildings which add much to its beauty, if we except the two Musjeeds, with their blue tiled domes. The walls round it are of no strength, and could be battered down in no time, and it is very improbable that any resistance would be attempted here.

The houses are all either brick or mud, and outside have a mean appearance. The streets are as usual very narrow and tortuous, and I need scarcely add filthy.

The only thing worth seeing is the bazaar, built by Kurreem Khan, which consists of a lofty and well-ventilated colonnade, built of yellowish bricks, roofed in, with sky lights at intervals, and perfectly screened from the sun. The wares displayed are certainly inferior to the accommodation afforded them; there is scarcely a thing worth purchasing, and those that are, are principally made elsewhere. The carpets are not of pretty patterns, and are so expensive that no one could wish to invest in them save as "curios," or unless blessed with more money than he knew what to do with. The enamel work on the pipe stems, bowls, and cups is certainly tasteful and worth buying, but it is very expensive, and the embroidered saddle-cloths are elaborate rather than pretty. There were some well-shaped water bottles for pipes, which, however, came from Constantinople, and a considerable display of articles brought from Russia, such as crockery, glass, "samovars," &c.

The inlaid work called "Khetemee" is something of the same nature as the Bombay ivory inlaid work, but it is not nearly so fine or in such good taste. It is used principally to ornament boxes, though Europeans have lately been endeavouring to get it applied to other articles, and I saw a rather handsome table that had been made for an Austrian attaché. It is made in the same way as, I believe, the Bombay work is, that is, long thin strips of plain and coloured ivory and wood are glued together in patterns, and then pieces of it are sliced off very thin and stuck on to the article to be ornamented. I daresay the Bombay work originally came from Persia, but if so it is, as I have said, a great improvement on the original.

The papier maché work also is pretty, but not equal in any respect to that of Kashmeer, and it is very dear.

I understand, however, that what is made in Ispahan is very superior. There is one thing in Sheeraz which strikes me as very strange after being accustomed to the horror an Indian Mussulman displays at the mention of wine, and that is the very open way in which the Persians drink wine, and in which it is made and sold in this town. This wine, which has a rather dry bitter taste, is not by any means to be despised, and being all the unadulterated juice of the grape is not likely to hurt any one. It is sold very cheap, about half to one kran* a bottle, although people who make it generally bottle it themselves, or else sell it in huge bottles called "kuraba," holding about a dozen quarts. The Nawab had the best I saw there, using it, of course, for his friends. I tasted some of this wine afterwards in England, and still thought it very palatable.

The women seem to go about the bazaars very freely, and though they are most closely veiled, I was surprised to notice that they appeared to talk to any men they pleased. These may, of course, have been their husbands, but then they may not, and I do not see how it could be proved, as of course no male would be allowed to take off a woman's veil, however strong his suspicions might be.

The only public buildings of Sheeraz were constructed by Kurreem Khan—who appears to have been the best ruler this province of Fars ever had—and some of these when first built, may have aspired to rank with third-rate European buildings. Now, however, everything is falling into ruin, and the not too inviting exteriors of these buildings have a mournful appearance of decay, typical, I am afraid, of Iran generally.

The prettiest place I saw in Sheeraz, was the drawing

* About 10½d.

room of Nawab Hoosen Alee Khan. This was a small room, with the walls most tastefully ornamented with stucco work, inlaid with mirrors in appropriate patterns, and with pictures interspersed here and there, which gave the room a very cheerful appearance, and did great credit to the Nawab's taste.

Persian houses seem all to be pretty much on one plan, and though this people are much superior in this, as in most other of the arts of civilization, to Indians, their houses do not accord much with our tastes. They all have dead walls towards the street, on which they open by a low door. Entering by this, you generally go through a dark, and more or less evil-smelling passage, and sometimes through a stable, till at last you emerge into the courtyard. This is the pleasantest part of the house, as it generally has a nice tank of water, and sometimes a fountain and a few trees or shrubs. These courtyards might be made very pretty, and when the houses are sufficiently high to keep off the sun, they are very delightful places to sit in during the heat of the day. All round this courtyard are rooms, at one end being placed the principal apartment, which always looks into the yard. Sometimes the houses are two stories high, and they all have flat roofs, which are used for sleeping on in the hot weather, hence the natural anxiety of each person to have his house higher than those of his neighbours, to prevent being overlooked, when he himself and his fair "sposas" are more "en déshabille" than accords with publicity.

The climate of Sheeraz, at this time of the year, is very agreeable, very like that of the Punjab at the commencement of the cold weather. Its elevation is nearly 5,000 feet, and it is said never to be very warm. The best quality of the climate is its great equability, for in

winter it is not nearly so cold as in the other parts of the table-land of Persia.

I have mentioned above the case of an officer who had passed in Persian in India, coming to Persia and finding that he knew very little of the language as spoken in the country. This brings me to speak of an idea which I have formed, that it would be more to the advantage of the Government if officers, instead of going to Calcutta to study Persian, were permitted, nay encouraged, to go to Sheeraz, where they would hear the best Persian spoken. At present officers go to Calcutta, where the climate is very trying, the living most expensive, and the temptations to neglect study are numerous. In Sheeraz on the contrary, the climate is, as I have said, very good indeed, living is extremely cheap, and while the students would have nothing to distract their attention, they could always secure the best teachers, and be sure to pick up the correct idiom and pronounciation. Then, after they had acquired a certain knowledge of the language, they might make little trips into the country, and thus add to our general knowledge of it. In addition to the advantage to individuals by this plan, there would also be much indirect gain to Government, from the people becoming more and more familiarized with our officers.

I went to call during my stay, on the Prince of Fars, the Hissam-oo-Sooltanut, with the Resident or Balioos, as they euphoniously call him. We had a ride of a mile or two over the stones (for which, *pace* Hafiz, far more than for its beautiful bowers and clear streams, the valley of Sheeraz should be celebrated) to the garden called the Dilkhoosha. This prince is regarded here, I don't know with what truth, as one of the most influential men in Persia, and therefore we may suppose that his reception

was what is regarded as correct; and I was much struck with the difference between it and that which one would receive in India. On arriving at the garden, we had as usual to ride half round it before an entrance could be effected, and then to wind our way through a few dingy individuals who neither looked insolent enough for officials, or abject enough for peasants. On entering we passed by a caricature or two of a soldier, and going through a neglected garden with dilapidated aqueducts, &c., we were ushered into a ruined building with a basin of water in the centre. Here, at one side of the basin or bath, were placed three or four chairs on a dingy carpet.

Presently His Royal Highness entered—a small, spare man, with strongly marked features and a very cruel expression—dressed in the black Persian hat, a white flannel coat and light blue trousers. His manners were courteous, and his conversation seemed very shrewd and intelligent, but I cannot say I was prepossessed in his favour. He seemed to me a man to whom mercy was an unknown feeling. Perhaps, however, I think I was prejudiced. I had heard him extolled as the ablest Governor Persia possessed, but when I inquired how he governed, I found it was almost entirely by cruelty. Severity with a people like the Persians is no doubt a necessity, but when one hears of a Governor who throws wretched women, convicted only of the crime of loving "not wisely but too well," down into wells—who has batches of robbers (made so by the grinding extortion of his own subordinates) placed in a row and their throats cut in cold blood—I must say it makes one quite sick. Severity that has no cloak in necessity becomes cruelty pure and simple, and Persian Governors must prove that Persian men and women cannot be kept

in order by less stringent measures than cruel deaths before I, for one, will give them credit for governing ability.

H.R.H. the "Sword of the Empire" promised us a treat in the way of a review of the Imperial forces at Sheeraz: so next day we all got ourselves up "en grande tenue" for the occasion, and mounting our horses proceeded to the place where, we had been informed, the review would take place. This was the Royal Square (Maidan-y-Shah); but when we arrived at this place, no troops were in sight. We then went to the plain outside the Ispahan gate, where we were informed that the troops would be found, but we had no better luck here. Finally, after hunting for the Imperial forces in every likely spot we could think of, we at last ran them to earth in a camp near the Juhan Nooma garden, and ascertained that the last thing they thought of that morning was a review; so we had to go reviewless to breakfast. It was never exactly explained why we were thus disappointed; but I should not wonder if the "Sword of the Empire" had repented him of the folly of showing us what scarecrows his troops really were, and, more Persico, not being able to tell the truth, had concocted some lame excuse.

The Maidan-y-Shah, the first place we had gone to, is also used as the place of execution, and it is here that the miserable banditti are made to expiate the crimes forced on them by the hideous misgovernment of their rulers. One of the telegraph officers told me that he had seen twenty poor wretches brought up one morning, and he afterwards heard—for he had not the stomach to remain and see—that they had been partially trussed, and their throats cut with perfect sang froid, in the name of God the Most Merciful!

One day while in the town, we went to see the Prince's

stables, and among many inferior animals we saw a couple of Toorkmuns. They were sixteen hands high and very fine animals. One of the peculiarities of Persian stable management is, that the horses are kept night and day, in hot weather and in cold, clothed in huge felts which are wound round and round their bodies with bands so that not a breath of air can ever reach them. The stables are always very dirty, and all available grass being required for forage, the dung is collected, dried, and used as bedding. The Hissam had also some pretty fair Arabs.

I had not yet any idea of doing more than riding on through Ispahan and Tehran to the Caspian; but talking with Colonel Ross about Persian geography began to unsettle me. He is an enthusiastic geographer himself, and a man of his temperament generally manages to impart some of his own ardour to others. The difficulty was to find a route which, at the same time that it had not been before explored, would not lead me too much out of the way. The routes from Sheeraz towards Kirman had already been fully examined by Pottinger, by Lovett, and by St. John, while a Spanish gentleman, M. Rivadaneyra, had just travelled from Khorumabad to Dizful;* and Mr. Mackenzie, an enterprising member of the firm Gray, Paul & Co., had traversed the route from Ispahan to Shoostur, in which I was much interested. Besides, it was too late in the year to go back to the low and hot plain country. There was a route from Sheeraz to Yuzd, which had never been traversed by any Englishman, though Trézel, one of General Gardaune's suite had accomplished it. Still, as I had never seen any account of it, and it would not take me much out of my way, I half determined to go by it before leaving Sheeraz.

* Vide appendix.

CHAPTER III.

SHEERAZ TO YUZD.

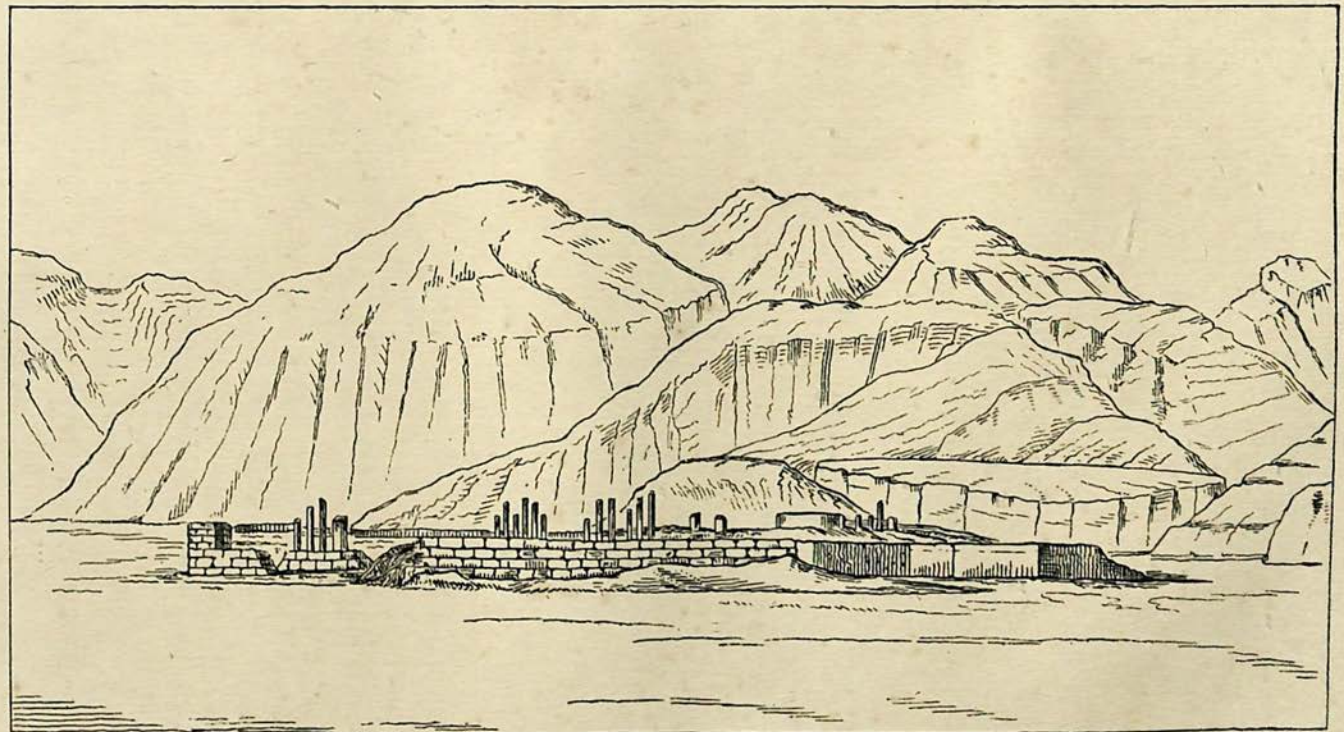
HAVING, with the assistance of the Nawab, made a bargain with a muleteer to accompany me with his mules wherever I wished, in order that I might be free to follow my own bent, I left Sheeraz in the afternoon of the 24th of April for Zargoon. The road first ascends by an easy gradient, but is very stony, to the Gardan-y-Bozgah, seven and a half miles from Sheeraz. It then descends gently into a narrow stony valley, where a halt can be made at an old caravanserai, as water and fuel are procurable. Having crossed this, it ascends another similar low pass called the Gardun-y-Abair, and then descends, the whole way to Zargoon being easy. I did not get to Zargoon till after dark, and as I left again at daybreak I did not see much of this village; it seems a place of some size, with wretched flat-roofed houses, built at the foot of a rocky hill.

This was my first experience of Chuppur Khanas. These are a sort of post-houses intended for the accommodation of travellers riding "chuppur," and for the post ponies. They are mostly of mud, square, with lofty walls flanked by towers at the corners, the length of the faces between the latter being 80 to 100 feet. The roof consists of a terrace about 18 feet broad, with a weak parapet round the outside, and apartments below for men or beasts. There is generally one door only,

with an upper room (Bala Khana). They have sometimes a well or water cistern inside, but depend on the caravanserai for water when, as is often the case, the two buildings are contiguous.

The Hissam was good enough to send five sowars with me, for his own sake, as he said. He does not "think there will be any danger on the road, but God knows what may happen in Persia." These sowars are very indifferently mounted, and their steeds evidently not looked after in the least. In fact, the whole get up is of the genus we call "collectori" in India. They are armed with long matchlocks made at Sheeraz, and some of them have a large knife called "kummer," which would be of very little use against a man with a good sword or a spear. They have no uniform, every man selecting his own colour, though the cut of their clothes is pretty much the same. The men look serviceable wiry fellows, but it remains to be proved whether they would fight. Zargoon is the home of many of the muleteers who ply between Sheeraz and Booshuhr. These men are fine hardy fellows, and thoroughly acquainted with their work. They look after their mules well, paying great attention to their feeding and to seeing that the pads are all right; and they seem quite to understand the proper principle of loading a baggage animal, which is, to place the load high up on the animal's back.

Next day, 25th of April, I went to Persepolis and pitched my tent among the ruins. The plain of Marvdusht, which I crossed en route, is the finest I had yet seen. It extends for fifteen miles in breadth, and must have a length of not less than forty miles. The soil is alluvial and it has abundance of good water. Yet, notwithstanding all these advantages, in this fine plain,



1. RUINS OF PERSEPOLIS. [*To face page* 44.

which under English rule would soon become a garden of plenty, there are so few villages that large portions of it are allowed to lie waste, and there is scarcely a tree in it. The valley is higher than Sheeraz, and possesses every requisite but good government to become most populous.

Though there are very few villages in the plain, numbers of Eliat* feed their flocks on its wide expanse. It extends from Pool-y-Khan to the gorge of the Mushudd river, and from Tajabad to Jahlium. Its villages are Tajabad, Shumshabad, Izabad, Deh-chasht, Rajabad, Fahwanda, Gashak, Ahabad, Rashmaijou, Khooslik, Khormalik, Dowlutabad, Sahlabad, Amzabad, Deh-Beed, Firozee, Kinara, Jahlium, Ahmudabad, Iahvanjan. Its provisions chiefly consist of rice. This valley is frequented by Eliats, such as the Kaslikai, who plunder the people if not kept in order. It is certainly the finest site between this and Booshuhr for a city.

The Koor river which is crossed on this march by a fine bridge of stone, the Pool-y-Khan, is a swift, deep, and unfordable stream, at this point thirty yards broad. It rises in the Deenar mountains, and flows into the Neyreez Lake, after being joined by the Pooloar river.

I shall not attempt to describe the ruins of Persepolis, nor to offer any opinion regarding them, for they have been described so often by men who have made them a study, that I am not likely to add much information to that already existing. However, I must say I could see nothing either particularly wonderful or beautiful in them, nor anything to justify the belief that there was ever a large city here. There are not above half a dozen buildings, and except the large hall of pillars, none are large or of striking symmetry. The size of the stones used is certainly remarkable, but this of itself does not

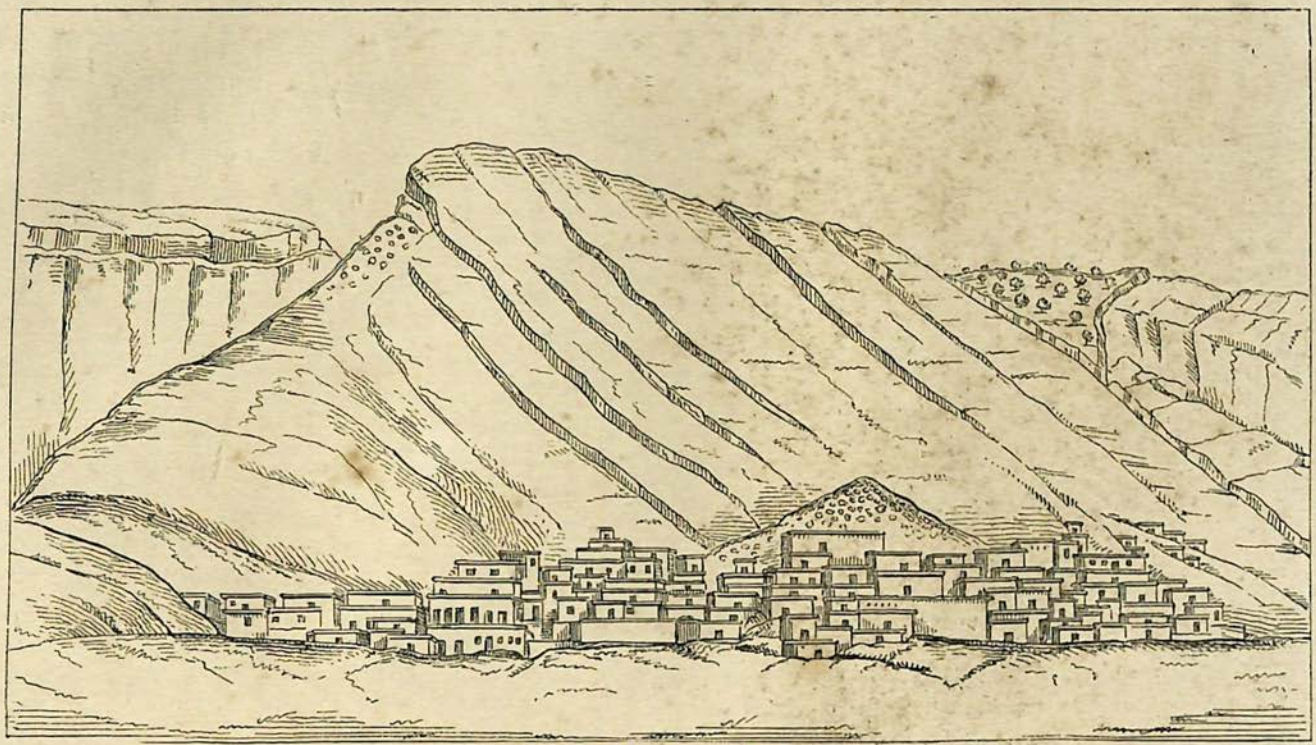
* A Nomad tribe of Turkish origin.

justify the idea of any great magnificence. Still, there is no doubt the place is worth turning a few miles out of one's road to see

I here said good-bye to Colonel Ross and Dr. Waters. Apart from the consideration of the very great kindness I had received from them, I had an additional interest in this farewell. They might be, as far as I could tell, the last European faces I should see for some time, and in saying good-bye to them, I felt I was bidding adieu to, cutting myself off, as it were, from the West, to plunge again into all the disgusting associations of the East.

In the evening I had a long talk with the headman of the village of Kinara, who was a dirty but sufficiently obliging individual. He confirmed the opinion I had formed of the fertility of this village. He sent me a party of matchlockmen to guard my tent, and in the morning as usual they demanded payment (inaum). I did not, however, give them much, as I consider that I am not bound to pay for my own protection in a country with a more or less settled Government; besides, if I paid everywhere, it would be a greater tax on my resources than they could stand.

On the 26th April I marched to Seevund. The road is very good, rising slightly the whole way, and following the route of the Poolwar, and is quite practicable for wheeled carriages. The village of Hadjeeabad, passed at about four miles, is situated on the north side of a well-cultivated valley, watered by the Poolwar, and has many small gardens and a good deal of cultivation belonging to it. From this there are three roads leading to Seevund; the first keeps under the hills to the left of the valley, and is practicable for laden animals; the second is a mere path over the hill to the rear, and



1. SEEVUND, FROM THE WEST. [*To face page* 47.

joins the first-named near the village of Dashtassan; the third, which is the one I travelled, is the best. It keeps more on into the centre of the valley, passing near the village of Saidoon, where there are about 150 houses and a cavaranserai, where, therefore, a halt can be made.

The celebrated sculptures of Nukhsh-y-Rujjub and Nukhsh-y-Roostum are passed on this march. I did not go to see the former, but the latter repaid in a measure my visit. These are very accurately and well described in Usher's "London to Persepolis," and also by Sir R. Ker Porter.

Seevund is a wretched-looking place, built on the side of a curious hill, which has a long shelving slope right down the village. The houses, of which there are said to be about 300, are of the meanest dimensions, and are all built of mud with flat roof made of reeds covered with mud. The village is commanded at short range on the east, south, and north. The only water supply is from the river. There is a small tract of level ground below the village, which reaches down as far as the river, and is covered with wheat cultivation. On the west side is a ledge covered with liquorice plant and camel thorn, and there is a large plantation of plane trees and vines to the north-west on the left bank of the river. A large number of mules are procurable in this village. It forms one of the petty sub-divisions of Fars, called Hafrek Bala, which consists of the villages of Seevund, Saidoon, Farook, Moradabad, &c., all of which are watered from the Seevund river. The climate is very good, the village having an elevation of 5,600 feet.

Next day, 27th April, I had a long march to Mushudd-y-Moorghab; the road was good, but stony in places. The scenery, too, was better than usual, for though the hills were equally bare, the rocks assumed

strange and often grand shapes. This is especially the case at the defile of the Tang-y-Saunboor, where the cliffs are very fine.

This defile is situated between the valley of Bolagee and that of Mushudd-y-Moorghab, being ten miles from the latter. The Moorghab river flows down the centre. The road is very good, except in a few places. The heights on either side rise grandly and abruptly, and command the defile the whole way. They would be difficult to crown, though the defile could be turned by a détour.

The road then emerges on to the fine plain of Bolagee, which extends from Kowamabad to Madur-y-Sooliman. It is quite level, and is completely surrounded by mountains. A fine stream of water flows to the south, and the soil is good, but the level of the plain being considerably higher than the stream, irrigation would be difficult. It is, in fact, not practised, and near the hills the plain is stony and unsuited for cultivation. The village of Mushudd-y-Madur-y-Sooliman is composed of a few miserable hovels, the inhabitants of which have annexed some of the pavements of marble from the neighbouring ruins of Pasagards, and the tomb of Cyrus, with which to build their houses! This is a queer commentary on the stability of greatness and power; the sorrowing survivors of the Great King building him a monument in marble to endure to the uttermost ages, and poor Hoosen or Alee quietly pilfering bits of his tomb to repair his wretched hovel! The tomb is very plain, and is built of huge blocks of marble.

The village of Mushudd-y-Moorghab, is rather a superior place, with better gardens and houses than are usually to be seen in Persia.

The Khan lives in a large building near, which is half house and half fort, and forms a very picturesque feature in the landscape. It is strong enough to answer its purpose of overlooking the village, but would be of no use whatever against European troops, as it is commanded at short musket range by a ridge of hills to the north, and the walls would soon be battered down. The village itself is built on a slight mound and the houses are better than usual. There is a great deal of water here, with much cultivation, and a fine plantation of poplar trees. This district has been in the hands of a family of Arab origin for over 700 years. Its limits extend from the Tang-i-Samboor to the village of Kadarabad, and its villages are Moorghab, Kadarabad, Dehras, Madar, Sooliman, &c. The village of Kadarabad, which is a large place, has much cultivation and plantations of poplars, and vineyards, for which last it is especially celebrated.

On the 28th of April I marched to Deh-y-Beed. The road is good, winding over undulating hills, and is quite practicable for carriages. Indeed I am informed that the Hissam came down in one the whole way from Tehran. This place is situated on a wild, desolate, plateau, surrounded by hills rising from 1,000 to 3,000 feet higher, and reminds me very much of Thibet. Though the climate is excellent and there is abundance of water, there are hardly any villages; near this are the ruins of an ancient Gabr mound. It is one of the stations of the Telegraph, and I was very hospitably put up by Sergeant Eadon, the official in charge. He has a nice house, which after the filth of the caravanserais, was very charming. The life here must be very lonely, as he never sees any one but the few European travellers who pass by, yet the climate is good, and living of course

very cheap, if European articles are dispensed with. He has a nice little garden, and grows the best potatoes I have seen for a long time.

I had a good struggle with myself during my stay here, whether to go straight home by the regular route, or continue meandering about this uninteresting country. I must say my own inclinations were towards the first, but I thought I might do a service to Geography, if not to Government, by going on, which might one day be appreciated. There was the thought too, that I should regret it very much hereafter if I did not go; as, if I missed this chance, I should probably never have another such opportunity. Still I did not like the life in the least, with all its dirt and discomfort; and I was longing to see my wee mite of a daughter, whom I had left a motherless infant at home. There was one thought which eventually determined me to turn off the beaten track. The life here was not pleasant, but I was in a frame of mind that made me look forward with anything but pleasurable feelings to the whirl and gaiety in a returned exile's life in England. Not two years before I had longed more than I can tell for this holiday, for then there was one with whom I built delicious castles in the air, in which each hour was to bring a new delight; but in one moment all these dreams and all these hopes had been quenched, and now where my future was to be cast seemed quite immaterial. Central Asia, Europe, India, were all the same to me, all covered with a black cloud, through which no glimmer of happiness was apparent. It was therefore without any excitement or care as to which way matters would turn out, that I determined to solve the question by chance. If heads turned up I would go home, if tails I would wander. It was thus that I

resolved to leave the main road at Deh-y-Beed, and take that which led to Yuzd, across a desert; but I did not even then settle what to do after reaching Yuzd; I might either go to Ispahan, or direct by Kashan to Tehran.

The road by Ubburkoo, as far as I know, has never been travelled by any Englishman, or if it has I have never seen any account of it, and that of M. Trézel is very difficult to procure, and it also I have never seen. I ascertained that there were two roads to Yuzd from Sheeraz, one of which turns off the main road at Mushudd-y-Moorghab, and goes by the village of Baonat. From this, my informant said, there was a desert until the village of Saneech, a couple of stages from Yuzd, was reached. But besides that I had already passed Mushudd-y-Moorghab, this route was said to be inferior to the other road, which left Deh-y-Beed and went by Ubburkoo. I therefore determined to follow this last.

On the 30th April, before leaving I had a light breakfast, and then said good-bye to my friend Sergeant Eadon. A meeting like this, with a man whom in the ordinary course of events one would not be thrown across, proves that there is not so much difference between the various stata of society as we imagine. "A man's a man for a' that." At all events, the best bred gentleman in Europe could not have treated me with greater courtesy or more delicate attention than did Sergeant Eadon, and I shall ever look back with pleasure to my stay with him at Deh-y-Beed.

About 5.30 A.M. I started, and got on to the road from the Serai, a few yards from Sergeant Eadon's house. The direction I took was NNW., and this con-

tinued for seven miles to the Gurdan-y-Goshtee, the road going over an undulating bleak table-land covered with stones, the hills on the right stretching from near the road far away to the east, those on the left being further off, though clearly a continuation of the same chain. This pass of Goshtee is noticeable as being on the water-parting between the drainage of Fars and Irak. The range is one of the main ranges of Persia, and seems to take its origin from Mount Elvand, from which it runs with a direction from NW. to SE., draining into the Kerkhah, Karoon, and the minor rivers of Fars on the south, and on the north into the Hamadan river and the Zamdehrood. It is crossed by all the main roads leading from N. to S., of many of which we have accounts, such as from Hamadan to Kirmanshah, Ispahan to Sheeraz, &c., but we are still far from having that amount of information which will enable us to state positively the course of this range. One thing, however, is clear, that the main range does not, as I was inclined at one time to suppose, go anywhere near the Sheeraz and Booshuhr passes, which are only over spurs of it. It is, however, noticeable that this ascent to the watershed of this range is very easy, the last part from Deh-y-Beed especially, the difference in elevation between the two places only showing a gradient of 1 in 120 feet, and the whole country being quite open on both sides of the road, and practicable for the movements of Cavalry and Artillery. How far this range extends to the east, it is in the present state of my information impossible to say, but I think it not improbable, that the pass on the east of Fars, between Kotro and Nehdeez, is over the same range. From the top the road descends even more gradually for a mile, after which for a half a mile to the

ruined caravanserai of Goshtee it is a little steeper, but still extremely easy. Here water is procurable, but there is no fuel, forage or supplies, and the ground is much confined. At Goshtee you move off the ridge altogether, and descend by a defile called Durra-y-Haneshk the whole way, that is, for 10 miles to the plain. I call this a defile, but it is a very easy one, as the hills on either side are generally very open, and in no place does it narrow inconveniently, while the roadway is excellent throughout. Between Goshtee and Haneshk is six miles, with no water; but at this place there is a nice little stream, and good ground for encamping. I rather wanted to halt here, but the commander of my escort objected on the score of danger from Bukhtiaree robbers. Deeming that as he was a Bukhtiaree, and probably had "raided" this road himself before now, he ought to know best, I agreed to go on.

There is, however, here a spring of very good water, together with plenty of fuel from the low scrub jungle about, and an excellent defensible site for a camp, if one was in sufficient force not to mind a chance of a brush with stray Bukhtiarees. However, as the chief of my escort did not approve of the place, we only stayed here long enough to get a little breakfast; after which we had a very long and hot march over a perfect waste to the first cultivation of the oasis of Ubburkoo of, in all, thirty-two miles. As the Sowars with me really seemed afraid of this road, which they said had about as bad a reputation as any in Persia, we marched the whole way in military order, with the baggage closed up and in the centre, the cavalry in front, and the infantry (!) flanking and crowning the hills where necessary. Perhaps it was as well we did adopt this

martial array, because our march was nearly being interfered with by a party of lurking Bukhtiarees. It was just as we were getting into the plain, having passed all the hills but one low rocky spur, which ran out right up to our road, that I happened to be looking at this hill, which completely screened our road ahead, and saw two little specks on the crest. At first I thought they were goats, but getting my telescope, saw they were men. This set me thinking. The hill was quite bare and rocky, with, however, some scanty herbage, so I concluded they were probably shepherds, as who else but shepherds were likely to be peering over a hill top in this manner. None but robbers, suggested a second thought. I therefore got off my horse and had a long look at them, and then they disappeared, never, of course, dreaming they had been seen so far off. I however, still continued my march in the old direction of the rock, thinking that if they were robbers I would have another look at them nearer, and, not at least, fall into any trap. When we had got close I ordered every one to turn sharp to the left, and made for the foot of the south side of the hill, with the Sowars on the threatened flank, and then dismounting, I went up the hill with my five or six matchlock-men, taking one of my Snider carbines with me. I judged that no one on the other side would see this manœuvre, as, if robbers, they would be fearful of showing themselves too long on the hill, and their disappearing just as we were getting within range of the naked eye, I took to mean that, if they were robbers, they would now wait for us at the rock, and then spring out on us. Though the hill at a distance seemed low, it was a pretty good tug to get to its crest, but when we did,

we were indeed rewarded. Down below in a hollow, completely hidden except from us, were seven horsemen waiting, as I thought they would. It now being evident what their intentions were, I told my matchlock-men to fire, knowing no blood was likely to be let. This they did, completely taking our friends by surprise, and the skedaddle which ensued was something to behold! Away they went over the stones as if the devil was behind them. I was glad no one was hit, as, in the first place, I daresay these poor devils are not so much to blame; and secondly, they might have got aid if any one had been killed. As it was, they never waited to see how many we were, but disappeared up a gully in the hills, about a mile off to the left. Seeing the coast clear, we made the best of our way to Bedaf, my party in great glee at our successful manœuvre, though we did not feel quite safe till we got to an "Ab-ambar" about five miles off.

This village of Bedaf is in the Ubburkoo division of Ispahan, and is situated on the south border of the oasis of this name, and consists of about thirty houses, which, however, cover a considerable space, as each has a large garden round it. Excellent water and a few supplies of all sorts are procurable here, and there are one or two fortlets of little or no strength in the village. I was led to a nice clean spot in one of these, and pitched my tent under the shade of the high wall, and very glad I was to get in, as the sun had been very hot. My arrival created quite a sensation; for, if any European had ever been here before, there was no one in the village who could remember such an event. Consequently young and old, youths and maidens, came to have a good look at the stranger. At first they were very shy and kept a good way off, but as they found I did not take much

notice of them, they became bolder. But all were perfectly quiet and respectful, and they showed a willingness to do anything I asked, that was very pleasing.

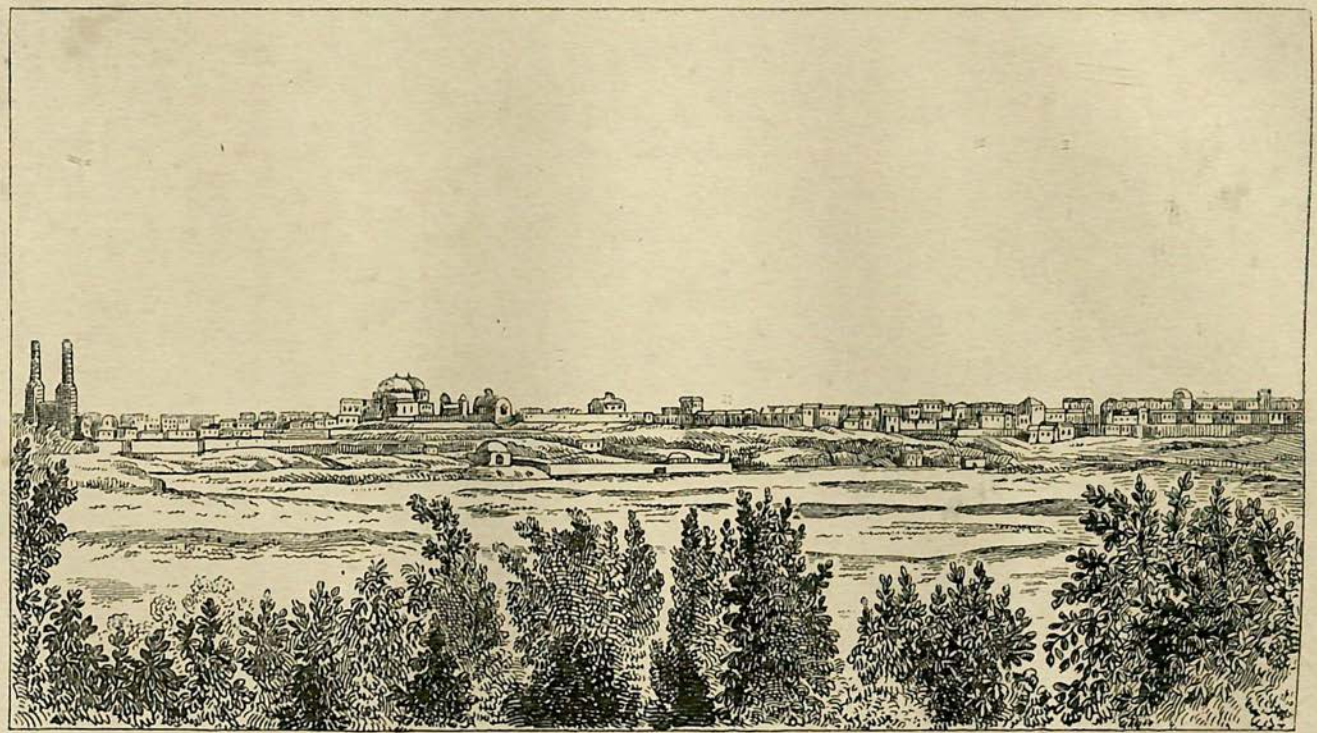
On the 1st of May I made a short march of about eight miles from Bedaf into Ubburkoo. The road went over fields at first, but these soon ceased, and were succeeded by a stretch of uncultivated land nearly up to Ubburkoo. All this track had evidently been cultivated in former days, as we passed numerous remains of "Kunats,"* by which water for irrigation purposes had been brought from the hills to the west.

I was very nicely lodged at Ubburkoo, in the house belonging to the Khetkhuda, where I had a nice clean airy upper room. The headman, Alee Akbar by name, came up soon after my arrival, and I had a long talk with him. He seemed a very nice gentlemanly old man. This is a scattered village, containing some 800 or 900 houses, situated in the centre of an oasis, itself surrounded by waste. This desert extends for about fifteen miles on the south, and for nearly thirty miles to the north, while to the north-west and south-east its length is indefinite, at least as far as the eye can see the country is of the same desolate nature. It is not sandy, but is composed of good soil, covered with stones and gravel, evidently washed down from the hills, and wherever watered, it produces excellent crops. It is not, however, likely to get more water than it does, which unfortunately only suffices for the oasis which is cultivated for a radius of about eight miles round the village.

Ubburkoo is of some importance,† being the chief

* Kunats are water cuts.

† It is celebrated as having been the place of assembly of the adherents of Luft-Ali-Khan Zand, before the last attack of that Chief on Sheeraz in 1793.



I. UBBURKOO. [*To face page 56.*

place of the division (Balook) of the same name, which contains about twenty-five villages. These are all situated round it at various distances, and the chief of them are Irdi, Mehrabad, Isfundabad, Shuhrabad, Shumshahabad, &c. From it, there are roads which lead to Yuzd, Kirman, Sheeraz and Ispahan, to which last province it belongs. There is a great deal of cultivation round, all of which is well irrigated by excellent water, which is brought down in "Kunats" from the hills to the west.

It seems absurd to note that it was evidently a much larger place formerly, as this is the case with nearly every place I have been in yet in Persia; and the fact is, I suppose, that while doubtless many cities have fallen off in inhabitants, the ruinous appearance of others is chiefly owing to the propensity of Persians to erect new houses in preference to keeping the old ones in repair. In the village there are few buildings of any interest, but there is a curious old ruined mosque with two very tall minarets, of a shape which I have not seen before; and on a hill to the east of the village is a tower which forms an excellent landmark, being visible as much as thirty-five miles off in a clear day. I went up with Alee Akbar to see it, and found it to be an octagonal tower about sixty feet in height, well built of rough stones and with a domed roof. On the east there is a door, but I found the inside to be a mass of ruins, the result of the labours of some "Feringhee," who, Alee Akbar said, had visited it about fifteen years ago, and after digging up its basement had disappeared Sheeraz way. He did not know his name, but seemed to have no doubt in his mind that he was stark staring mad. The natives call it Goombut-y-Alee, but this seems to be the Sheeah equivalent for attributing everything

to Kafirs, so prevalent in Afghanistan and on the NW. frontier of India. There is nothing particularly striking about it, but round the bottom of the dome there is an inscription in, I believe, Kufic characters.*

In the far distance to the NW. is a low detached hill, at the fort of which I was informed there were extensive ruins called Shuhr-y-Sufeed, said to be of the same period as the Goombut-y-Alee, *i.e.*, that of Khosroo Purvez. I have never seen a notice of these in any work; and they may be worth the while of an archæologist to visit. They are probably as near Ispahan as Ubburkoo.

The roads all round this place are considered so unsafe from marauding parties of Bukhtiarees that there is not much intercourse between it and the outer world, though it is said this is not nearly so much the case since the Hissam-oo-Sooltan became Governor of Fars. All the houses in this village are built of mud with domed roofs, and the streets are in a most villanous state of dilapidation, being composed of a hard conglomerate rock broken up in places. The approximate bearings of various places round, taken from the Goombut-y-Alee were said to be as follows:—Deh-y-Beed 182°, Surmak 248°, Ispahan 306°, Yuzd 52°, Baouat 152°. From 140° to 300° is a high range of hills, evidently the same as that of Fars. There is then a small open plain, which is probably continuous up to 358°, when a detached hill shuts out the view. This plain is said to extend to Ispahan and Naeen. From 358° to about

* It is very curious, that M. Trézel in his "Voyage en Perse," makes no mention whatever of this tower. It is a very striking feature in this landscape, from whatever direction Ubburkoo is approached, and there is so little generally to be seen in Persia, that it seems almost impossible to escape noticing such a tower as this.

110°, is a range of hills which runs from NW. to SE. between Ubburkoo and Yuzd. About 120° is the centre of a plain said to extend to Kirman: these last bearings are only approximate, as the view was shut out.

My next march, on the 3rd May, was a long one to the village of Deh-y-Sheer, 36 miles. The road is over a level plain the whole way, on a bearing of 50°; at four miles we passed the village of Shumshabad, which would be a better division of the distance between Deh-y-Beed and Deh-y-Sheer than Ubburkoo, and water and supplies are procurable. Then it goes over a barren plain for four miles, to a ruined empty fort where water is sometimes procurable. Then for eighteen miles it continues over a plain, saltish in places, sandy in others, but generally covered with fine gravel, to an old fort called Kulla Soorkh, where a halt could be made, as there is a good tank of water (ab-ambar).* No supplies, however, are procurable, and it is said to be an unsafe spot. Then the road goes on for four miles to another tank which is fed from the last. Here a little coarse grass appears, and in two miles one comes to the commencement of the cultivation of Deh-y-Sheer, the village being still one mile on.†

There is another road from Sheeraz to Yuzd, as follows:—To Mushudd-y-Moorghab by the regular

* Ab-ambars are large underground reservoirs lined with brick. When the supply of water arises from rain only, these are so placed as to catch all the surface from a sufficiently large area. They are sometimes filled from springs or from "Kunats" and are in all cases covered with vaulted roofs of masonry and have a flight of steps by which the water is approached.

† M. Trézel says, p. 87., vol II., of this march—"En dirigeant notre marche vers une montagne qui va du N. à l'E., nous parvîsmes pres d'une mare d'eau salée, non loin de laquelle, vers le SE., on vient aussi recueillir du sel."

Sheeraz and Ispahan road, whence to the village of Baouat, the road is said to be good the whole way, and is probably of the same nature as that by which I travelled. From this one road goes to Isfundabad thirty-two miles, and thence over a vast plain to Ubburkoo fourteen miles on. But the other then goes to Burdee Sheeraz, then by Chah Ismanloo and Muzra to Suneech; whence the road joins that which I followed two miles west of Farasha.

Deh-y-Sheer is in the Poosht Koh division of Yuzd, and is situated five miles from, and on the south slope of, the hills to the north of the Ubburkoo plain, and has a deal of cultivation, all in terraces and well watered. It has forty houses all of mud with domed roofs. There is a good and a new serai here, and the remains of a strong old fort called Kulla Sheer, said to have been built by a former king, named Mahamed Mozuffur, there being a fine inscription to that effect in enamelled tile work over the gateway. To the east is a flat-topped hill, with scarped sides like the "droogs" of Southern India, called Kulla-y-Sheer.

I had again excellent quarters in this place, and was rather agreeably surprised thereat, as I thought when I left caravanserais behind I should have always to pitch my tent; but the fact is that I have been far better housed than before; and, as this seems to be the case everywhere I go now, I may as well say how I manage it. Generally, while I stop to breakfast, or towards the end of the march, I send on a man to the "Khet Khuda" of the village I intend halting at, to say a "Sahib" is coming, and will be obliged for a place to stay in; and the result has always been that on arrival I have been met by the "Khet Khuda" with a "You

are welcome: your place is ready." "Hasan Agha," the headman of this place derives the name Sheer from a story that formerly there was a forest here infested by lions; but I should think that this derivation is very doubtful.

As the country from this place to Yuzd was said to be quite safe, I dismissed my guard here, with a small present each. Poor fellows! I fancy it is not often they see any coin; so, perhaps, they make up for the want of it by fleecing the villagers on the way back.

I left Deh-y-Sheer on the 4th May. The road goes in a north-east direction for four miles, ascending imperceptibly over gravel to a ruined fort; a duct of good water running the whole way by the side of the road. Then it goes on for eleven and a half miles to the hamlet of Shah Nisheen, where there is much cultivation and gardens. At half a mile beyond this village it enters the hills and turns more east; ascent easy and gradual, becoming more stony for a mile and a half, when the track becomes steepish, passing over shelving, slippery rock, where a road would have to be made for artillery. Then there is an ascent for half a mile, followed by 200 yards of level. After this the road descends easily over gravel to the commencement of the cultivation of the village of Dareshk for half a mile, the hills on either side of the road being open and practicable for infantry. Then the road winds round the hills, going up and down by easy gradients for three-quarters of a mile to the village of Dareshk. One quarter of a mile after leaving this it turns more north, and is pretty level for a mile, when the ascent of the Gurdun Aleeabad commences and continues for a mile and a half, the last part a little steeper than the first, but not difficult. There are high rugged hills on

both sides of the pass, which completely command it, and these would be difficult to crown. The height of the pass I make about 8,900 feet.

The road from this point descends easily for 300 yards, and then more gradually, winding round hills to Aleeabad in five miles; the whole distance of this march being about seventeen miles. The pass crossed on this day's march takes me over the second great range of Persia. I cannot as yet make out the origin of this range, but it is clearly the same as the one crossed on the road from Kashan to Ispahan, near Kohrood. It is again crossed between Ispahan and Yuzd, and then continues its course south-east till it crosses the road by which I have come. A little to the east of where I crossed it is called the Sheerkoh, and is crossed by a road from Taft to Shuhr-y-Babak. After this it appears to run parallel with the Yuzd and Kirman road, and to keep to the west and south of Kirman, beyond which I have no information to guide me regarding its further course.

The village of Aleeabad is in the Pesh-koo sub-division of Yuzd, is situated in a valley completely surrounded by hills, and has much cultivation. It consists of 250 houses, built with stone and mud and generally dome-roofed. There are a great number of willow and plane trees here and abundance of excellent water. The climate of this place is very pleasant in summer, but is said to be too cold in winter. The Pesh-koo is one of three sub-divisions in these hills, the other two of which are called Meean-koo and Poosht-koo. The first contains the villages of Aleeabad, Nussurabad, Suneech, and Farasha. The second those of Manshat, Banut Ki, Sadat, Tizargan, Hanza, Deh Bala or Hidesh, Dara, Gorafshat, and Tizeneh; while on the third are Deh-y-

Sheer, Abdoola, Irdan, Kahdooya, Sakhoi, Neer, Irnan, Bakh, and Zardan.

On the 5th May I marched from Aleeabad; the road descends gradually through a gravelly valley the whole way to Taft, twenty-three miles. The hills on the south of this valley are the main ridge just crossed, and called Sheerkoh; those on the north, which is evidently only a spur, are called the Ubburkoo.

The general direction of the road is ENE. At about three and a half miles a hamlet is passed close on the right, with trees and water. Two miles on three small villages are passed on the left, and at nine miles another village is passed on the left, and a road to the right over the hill to Suneech. At twelve miles the regular road from Suneech joins from the right, and at fourteen and a quarter miles enters the fields of Farasha, a place of about fifty houses, with large fruit gardens and much good water, and continues through the village of that name for three-quarters of a mile. At twenty miles a road from Deh Bala joins in from the right, and at twenty and a quarter miles enters the commencement of the village of Taft, and continues through it for three miles to the Bagh-y-Sad.* The valley near Aleeabad is five miles wide, and continues to be from about this width to three miles for a distance of twelve miles, when it begins to narrow gradually till at Farasha the village is commanded from both sides. At two miles from Farasha it narrows to a defile, and

* On this march I noticed a very curious looking hill, which in the distance looked just like the head of a giant lying down. To the left was one of the long glacis slopes so commonly seen at the foot of the ranges in Persia, and just over the crest of this was apparently a monstrous head, with the nose and mouth and chin distinctly marked; and then a little farther on, and just where it would be, supposing a giant of that size to be lying down, was a rounded hill, which looked just like his paunch. He appeared to be lying asleep right across the valley.

continues so till the commencement of the Taft cultivation, when the hills recede again, leaving a valley about

CURIOUS HILL.

one mile wide, in which that village is placed. Here water and all supplies are abundant.

Taft is a very large village, situated on both sides of a ravine, which drains the centre of a narrow valley

formed by spurs from the main range above Aleeabad, and the whole of the level ground is occupied by the gardens or fields. It is said once to have had over 1,500 houses, but since the famine there are not more than 1,000 residences occupied. Of these, 200 belong to Guebres,* of whom this is one of the chief villages in Persia.

Taft boasts a very fair covered bazaar, with a domed roof. Nearly all the houses are also domed; and there is a queer little fort, called Kulla-y-Gurmseer, on the north of the ravine, perched on the top of an isolated rock; but as it is completely commanded, and has only thin mud walls, it possesses no importance.

There are many fine gardens in the valley, among which may be mentioned the Bagh-y-Sad, where there is a well-built house with a high "bad-geer" in it, and which many of the other houses also have.

Taft is celebrated as the place of manufacture of some of the best felts in Persia. These are of the same material as felt in Europe, and are used to place under carpets, which give the floor a soft feel; but as they are hardly suited to European houses, I did not purchase one, though I went to see the manufacture carried on. The patterns are sometimes very pretty, and they are made by laying the different coloured threads on the felt and then subjecting them to pressure, by which the pattern is incorporated with the felt carpet. Later on, at Yuzd, I bought a very pretty one, which came in very useful on the march, and at the end of it the colours were as bright as ever. The best felts are, I understand, made at Kirman, and one which I bought of a beautiful green colour was certainly superior in fineness to any-

* Pronounced Gabres, as a in "sat," and as re in "cadre." They are also called Gubburs and Gowers.

thing I have ever seen elsewhere. In this latter quality it was unique, more resembling a soft blanket than a felt.

Taft is, as I have said, one of the principal villages of the Guebres, there being two hundred families of them at this place. These people are here nearly all cultivators, and occupy a very different place in the estimation of their fellow countrymen to their more fortunate brethren of Bombay—the Parsees. They all wear cotton clothes made out of the brown cotton—peculiar to South Persia and Arabia, I believe—and turbans of the same material. They have a rather hang-dog appearance, as if they expected to be jumped upon every moment. Taft has a number of good gardens, and enjoys a better climate than Yuzd, from which people consequently sometimes come up in the hot weather.

I regret very much that when I was at Taft I had not read M. Khanikoff's "Mémoire sur la partie Meridionale de l'Asie Centrale," or I might have explored the famous cavern of Taft, which he mentions as containing very rich lead mines and traces of turquoise; and my attention was certainly not called to this cavern.

M. Khanikoff gives the following account of this cave:—

"Cet individu, avec deux inhabitans de Taft, et ayant ordonné à l'un d'eux l'attendre jusqu'au jour à l'entrée de la grotte, il y penetra avec l'autre villageois. Une galerie, qui s'enfonçait rapidement sous la montagne, les conduisit dans une vaste assemblage de cavités spacieuses rayonnant à perte de vue dans toutes les directions. Un conduit semblable à la première galerie aboutissant à l'une de ces cavités, et debouchant dans une caverne étendue où une abondante veine d'eau

jaillissait d'une fissure laterale. Un vaste bassin formait le fond de cette caverne, et son eau bruit sourd dans un gouffre que semblait être très profond. Un etroit sentier, où à peine on pouvait placer le pied, permit aux explorateurs de faire le tour d'une partie du bassin, et de continuer leurs récherches apres avoir parcouru une suite de cavernes plus ou moins spacieuses, où l'on risquait de dégarer à chaque pas. Ils enterèrent dans une grotte où ils aperçurent des squelettes humains et quelques lambeaux de vêtements, à demi pourris—triste dépouilles de quelquesun de leurs hardis predecesseurs qui y avait perdu la vie. Bientôt apres, l'un des explorateurs, celui qui portait la torche allumée, fit une chute et la torche s'éteignit. Resté dans une profonde obscurité, ils firent de vains efforts pour rallumer leur flambeau. Ne pouvant y reussir, ils resolurent neanmoins de continuer leur exploration en s'avançant à tatons. Ils parvinrent ainsi dans une cavité à base carrée, faiblement éclairée par une fissure laterale. Un immense bloc detachée de la voûte de cette caverne gisait sur le sol et bouchait, à ce qu'il parut aux explorateurs, l'entrée d'un passage qui conduisait probablement à d'autres cavités souterraines. Ayant fait plusieurs fois le tour de ce rocher sans avoir pu trouver aucune issue nouvelle, ils resolurent de revenir sur leurs pas, d'autant plus qu'il était une heure de la nuit, et qu'ainsi ils avaient marché pendant plus de douze heures. Les specimens de roches qu'ils apporterent avec eux permirent d'etablir que les cavernes qu'ils avaient visité contenaient des gisements de lapis lazuli et du mineral d'argent."

The greatest luxury, in fact one may say the only luxury, one enjoys in such travelling as this, is the bath as soon after arrival as possible. But in Persian houses

it is not always easy to bathe in any privacy. For instance, the house in the Bagh-y-Sad where I lived, consisted of three large rooms extending all the depth of the building, with high and broad arches which none of my cloths would span. So I was obliged to erect an apology for a screen, and perform my ablutions in the best way I could. I was getting through these successfully, when I heard women's voices close by, but as my back was turned I did not look round or take any notice, taking it for granted they were those of passers by. Presently I heard a laugh; and a woman said, "Look, how white his body is." "Yes," replied another, "but how red his face." This could hardly apply to any one but me; my face *was* somewhat red from a month's exposure to the sun, and I knew no one in these parts was likely to have a very white body, so I looked round. Immediately they saw themselves discovered they ran away laughing. Who these women were I could not ascertain, but from the clothes they wore, I fancy they were Mahomedans; so this is a proof, but I must say the only one I had in Persia, that these veiled beauties are not so much indisposed to look on things unlawful as is supposed.

There are roads from this place to all the villages of the subdivisions of Meeankoo and Peeshkoo, over which subdivision the "Kalanter" of this place seems to exercise some authority.

The country up to Yuzd consists, first of four miles of hills, then four of desert stony plain, succeeded by five miles of gardens, villages, and cultivation. I sent on my "Peshkhidmut"* the night before, to ask the Governor to tell off some place for me to live in, and I was much astonished, and a little annoyed, to find I

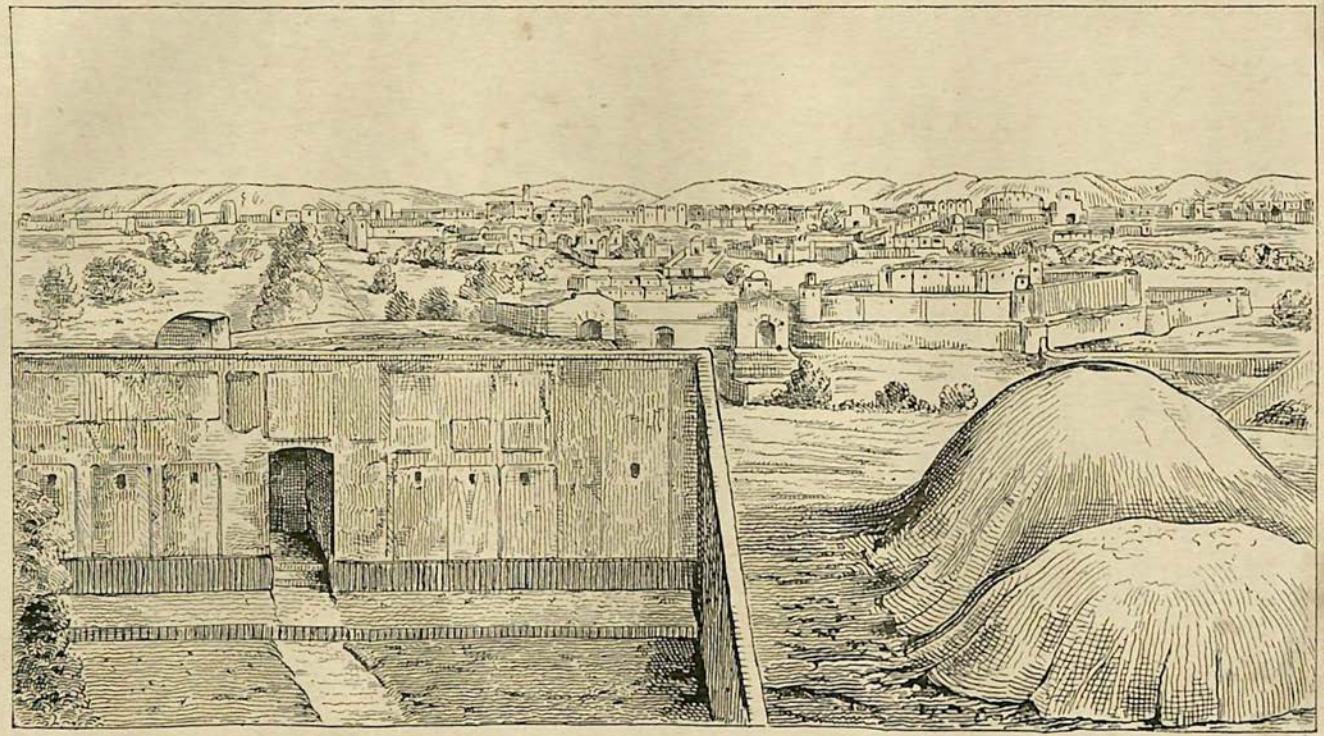
* Body servant, valet.

had to go through an "istikbal."* I was met four miles from Yuzd, at the Bagh-i-Nasar, by Mahamed Hoosen Khan, the head officer of the Sowars of the Yuzd Government, and about thirty Sowars of an irregular description. At first we got on very well, for although the old gentleman was not very talkative, the Sowars beguiled the time by some really excellent, though useless, feats of horsemanship. These consisted of various sports; in one a man would galop away closely followed by another, towards whom he would turn right round on his saddle, and fire at with his rifle; then they fired under their horses' legs, disappeared on the left side of the saddle, &c. One game called "taghulla" was to throw a small stick ahead on to the ground at full galop, in such a way, that it would, after bounding several times, come up on the horse's off side and be caught. This is very difficult evidently, as none of them succeeded in doing it. These sort of games, however, are of very little use, excepting as increasing the nerve of the riders.

I thought the last half of the road would never come to an end, the elderly cavalier who was doing the honours, would persist in going so slow; so out of politeness I went slow too. However, as the result of this manœuvre was only to make him crawl, I, after my patience was exhausted, took the bull by the horns and made my horse walk out. This it appeared, was exactly what was wanted, and we got on better after. They then took me through the city, through, it seemed to me, miles of covered bazaar, till at last, we turned up at a fort, and I understood that I had been taken to see the

*Istikbal means a ceremonious meeting of a stranger, on his entering a town. By the dignity and number of those composing it, is the honour measured.

Governor or rather, his brother who is acting for him, he having gone to pay his respects to the Shah, on the occasion of Nowroz, which means, I suppose, in English that he has gone to undergo his annual fleecing in order to see whether he likes losing his wool better than the people whom he fleeces all the rest of the year.



I. YUZD, FROM THE BAGH-Y-DOWLUT. [*To face page* 71.

CHAPTER IV.

YUZD TO BEEABUNNUCK.

MAHAMAD HOOSEN KHAN, the brother and deputy of the Governor of Yuzd, is a pale gentlemanly man, with good features, good eyes and nice, quiet, self-possessed manners. I apologised for coming in my riding dress, but said I could not think of going to my lodging without thanking him for kindly placing so nice a house at my disposal. He seemed much pleased, said he was always glad to see Englishmen, and was very happy to be able to do anything for me. I could not help thinking which of our two pleasant harmless fibs was nearest the truth. I am sure mine was a long way off it; as, firstly, I had never meant to call on him till next day; secondly, I did not care whether he had given me a place to put up in, or told my servant to go and be bastinadoed. However we got on very well, though my Persian was rather lame, consisting as it did in picking out such words of Hindustani as I thought were Persian, putting them together, and connecting them with any spare "guftams," "raftis," "khelis," "shumas" or "bad neests" I might happen to have about me. After a quarter of an hour's interview we parted, and I must say I was very glad to get back and find myself lodged in the Bagh-y-Dowlut in a fine but dilapidated garden house, where a large marble bath filled with cold water, was what I most appre-

ciated. This day was the hottest I had hitherto felt in Persia, and not feeling inclined to go again to the bazaar, I sent for my money agents. The first who came was Hadjee Yahteya, a sour looking old man, and evidently a humbug. He answered me with an air of the deepest humility, which made me take a dislike to him at once. I felt sure that he would much rather have had me down on my face and be cutting my throat to the tune of "Allaho-Akbar" than sitting talking to me, and I consider I was right in this conjecture, because, directly he went out, I saw him wash off his hands the contact of the infidel. After this I felt it would be a sin to let him make any money out of me, and I was delighted to find in the other agent who had been named to me, viz., Hadjee Mahamad Alee Arab, a much more pleasant old man, and apparently quite sincerely profuse in his offers of service. At the same time a prying old gentleman paid me a visit. He looked at everything I had with me, each of which elicited from him the profound remark, "How wonderful." Before long, I got very tired of this, and hinted that I had other things to do. At last he came to the point of his visit, asking if I could give him some medicine for a disease which shall be nameless. I was so disgusted that I said "No, I could not give him any medicine, but I could give him a bit of my mind, which was that an old man like him should be ashamed to require such a thing," and so he went off in despair.

My next visitors were a party of Guebres from Bombay. My "peshkhidmut" who was a Hadjee, and consequently had an odour of great sanctity about him, was evidently much disgusted at the impertinence of people, the whole of whose ancestors had been burnt, even hinting at an interview. However, I was not going

to turn round on my old Parsee friends, and so I insisted on their being admitted. Accordingly eight or ten came in, out of which number some four or five had just arrived from Bombay, and could consequently speak Hindustani, so we got on swimmingly. The principal burden of their song was that they were bullied, and all wanted to go to Bombay. When some Persians who were in the room went out, they abused them openly, and said they never got any justice, but were always ill-treated. Of course it is more than probable that there is a great deal of truth in what they said; but I must say, that though they always look very humble, I have never seen any one of them ill-treated, and the well-to-do appearance of most of them, shows, I think, that their lot is not so hard as they would make out.

They were an extremely good looking lot of men, more so than the Parsees of Bombay, and I suppose the reason of it is the more healthy climate and work they have. They are not so fair as some of the Bombay Parsees, but have not the same sallow waxen complexions, and this is the same with their women. The men wear long coats of brown cotton striped with white, with white or earth coloured turbans, and they nearly all had beards. The women are dressed more like the conventional idea of the oriental woman one reads of than anything I ever saw before. They are fond of many colours, and have a coloured turban on their heads, a blue or checked shirt, and variegated trowsers. They do not veil themselves indoors. yet, judging from those I saw, perhaps it would be better if they did, for if they covered all but their eyes, like their Mahomedan sisters, they would at least always have the chance of suggesting to passers

by the possibility of a pretty face below the bright dark eyes which never look old.

Next morning I went to see Mahamad Hoosen again, and to do him honour, appeared in uniform. He sent twenty "ferashes," that is, long coated and black hatted ruffians, who walk two in two in front of you, and hit any one they fancy, on the bare pretext that he is in your way, thus showing their zeal for your safety and perhaps paying out an old grudge at the same time. The Governor was as pleasant and gentlemanly as usual.

The conversation usual in a morning call scarcely bears repeating; but there is one thing noticeable in that of Persian gentlemen, that it is not so utterly inane as that of the ordinary Indian. The conversation of an Indian with a European, generally consists of a string of silly questions and weary answers; but a Persian frequently gives most entertaining and original accounts of events or scenes to which the conversation may allude.

I was inveigled also into calling on the Mooshtaheed, or chief priest of Yuzd. He received me in a miserable filthy room, and could not or would not manage to raise a single chair for me; I was therefore obliged to squat on the ground. I was not much pleased with his questions, and could not help thinking that he had got me there to inveigle me into an argument about our religions; or else to show off to a crowd of unwashed holinesses, the cavalier way in which he treated an infidel. I wished very much I had been able to speak the language thoroughly, as I am quite sure I could have shut him up. After several impertinent inuendoes, he asked me among other things, whether I thought my religion better than that of Mahomed the blessed, and

why? I said, "I certainly think my own religion the best, because it inculcated charity, forbearance, and mercy; his, lust and murder." He got very angry at this, and wanted to go on, but I said I objected to religious arguments, and would not continue, but as he had asked a plain question, I had given him a plain answer. He asked me several more rather impertinent questions, but I think he got as much as he gave, and "so we two parted," the reverse of friends. One of the things he asked me, was, why I was travelling? I replied, for pleasure. He said "Surely such a great man as you, do not come to such countries as ours for pleasure." I replied, "In the first place, I am not a great man, and in the second, I travel for the same reason that induced your Shah to go to England, viz., curiosity, and a wish to study other people."

Yuzd is situated in what may rightly be termed an oasis. In all directions, immediately outside of the city and surrounding villages, there is a howling wilderness, where the sand seems to be gradually encroaching on the cultivation. I had always before found it rather difficult to realize such a thing as a city buried in sand and disappearing entirely. But places like Yuzd show the process clearly enough. At several points in the circumference of this town, the sand has reached quite up to the top of the wall and is now every day being blown into the interior. Of course the progress is slow, but it seems very sure. The view of Yuzd from any direction is extremely uninteresting and presents nothing but a sea of house-tops, of a dead earth colour, only varied, but not relieved by numerous "badgeers." There are some few trees, but these are generally not high enough to reach above the houses. The streets are as tortuous, but not more dirty

than usual, and streams of water flow through many of them. The bazaars, as buildings, are of mean appearance, but they contain a great variety of articles, and seem to be very busy. One of the most noticeable features of this place is the large number of "badgeers"* "sardabs,"† and "zer zamins," ‡ which are met with, and which go to show that the climate is much warmer than in other parts of Persia above the passes. The heat here, however, is not, in May at least, great, and is nothing like so bad as in India. During the few days I remained the thermometer never went higher in a room open all round with no attempt at cooling, than 82°; at night it went down to 72°, and in the early morning to 66°. One day I took a ride all round the walls, and the result of my inspection was not to impress me with any idea of strength. In fact they are such miserable affairs that they cannot be regarded as any defence to the place, and the town has no importance as a military tactical position. It is surrounded in every direction by houses, fields, villages, and walls, and its walls are in such a dilapidated state, that it is difficult to make out where its bounds are. I should say, nearly as much space was occupied by ruined houses, and abandoned enclosures, and cemeteries, as by the residences of the living. Certainly nothing could be done to improve this wretched place till these were all cleared away. The remains of a rambling, large, old fortified enclosure called, Narang-Kala, and the ground unoccupied and unused in it, and round it, would alone

* Literally an airy house. They are, as mentioned before, apartments built on the tops of houses, and open on all sides so as to catch every breath of air.

† Sardab, a subterraneous room.

‡ Zer zamins, an apartment similar to sardab.

yield a very handsome profit, if the walls were all knocked down and the site turned into gardens.

There are no buildings of any interest or beauty in the place, unless the ruins of the Jooma Masjid are excepted. This has two very high and symmetrical "minars," which with the front of the building were formerly covered by the blue and green enamelled tile-work called "Kashee," which is seen more or less all over Asia.

The chief manufacture of the place is silk, which is the best in Persia. The raw material is chiefly brought from the province of Gheelan. It is made up into cloths of various kinds, the prettiest of which is a beautiful fabric called Hoosen Koolee Khan. This is very rich, yet very quiet in colour, and would be admirably suited for ladies' dresses.*

Very good candied sugar and sweetmeats are made here, and these are consumed in large quantities, the Persians being extremely fond of all sweets. So much is this the case, that I am rather surprised to find that no Italian confectioner has, as far as I know, thought it worth his while to settle in any of the large cities of Persia. The Persians have the taste for sweetmeats very strongly developed, and all the materials for making almost every kind are to be found on the spot.

Among other manufactures I noticed shoes, namoods, carpets, earthenware, and brass pots, and, as I know to my cost, some execrable wine, made by the Guebres. I was rather disappointed at the inferiority of this last, as some Sheeraz wine I brought with me was very good and sound, and I had hoped to have replenished my stock on the way. There is, however, in Yuzd, in great abun-

* I gave one piece to a lady friend of mine, and she made it up into a dress, the effect of which was most destructive.

dance, a substitute, which more than makes up for it, viz., excellent ice, which is brought in the winter from the Sheerkoo mountains.

During my stay I had a long and very interesting talk with some of the leading merchants, taking down information of all the routes which lead from Yuzd in every direction, and as the result of my inquiries I found most of the trade comes from Bundur Abbass, and goes on to Tehran. Some goes to Ispahan, and some comes from Sheeraz; and, strange to say, some goods also come from Tabreez, by Tehran, to go to Herat, a nice roundabout route it would appear. It certainly seems that England should easily be able to command the market of this place at least, as goods can be brought by sea to within twenty marches and carried on camels by a road which is only difficult in one or two places.*

The Guebres sent a deputation before I left to ask me if I would pay them a visit; and of course I complied. I daresay the Mahomedans did not like it, or think very much of me, for going to the house of these people; but I did not think it would be right to give them any reason to believe Englishmen share their feelings in regard to the Guebres. The chief man who appeared, or rather the principal man who could speak Hindustani, bore the historic name of Kai Kaoos. He was the brother of

* From Yuzd there is a direct road which goes to Nusserabad, in Seestan by the Loot desert in fifteen stages from Bafk, eighty-five miles from Yuzd on the Kerman road, via Neh. 1. For the first twenty-five farsakhs there is no water to Chusma Shand. 2. Six farsakhs to another chusma. 3. To Gormab, eight farsakhs. 4. Gullachab, twelve farsakhs, water at four farsakhs. 5. Sar-Sarchal, eight farsakhs, water, village. 6. Baseeran eight farsakhs. From Baseeran to Neh, this road is said to be quite practicable for a force in the cold weather with camels, provided proper arrangements are made to cross the first march. A farsakh, or farsang, is equal to about 3¾ miles. Chusma, is a fountain or spring.

one Rasheed, who not long before was shot down in the streets of Yuzd in cold blood, it is said at the instigation of the Mooshtaheeds. He had just come from Bombay, in search of what would seem, in Persia, an eminently unattainable thing, justice; but as he seems pretty determined, and is protected from open assault by his certificate of being a British-born subject, he may perhaps get some money out of the business. I shall very much doubt the murderer being executed, or even punished, especially as he has taken refuge in Mushudd. During a short but enjoyable visit, I took the opportunity to tell these people I was sorry to find that they were not treated on an equality with others, but as the country was not ours we could not help them; and, therefore, my advice was to leave it, and go to Bombay as soon as possible. This but few of them seemed inclined to do, giving as their reason that all their worldly goods, as well as their families, houses, and lands were here; that they could not sell their property, and take away their families, without its becoming known, and then the Persians would not let them go. If it is the case, that the Persian Government think the Guebres worth keeping, they should have sufficient sense to see that it would be better worth while to treat them well; but I suppose the real reason for the oppression of these poor wretches lies in the bigotry and power of the abominable Mooshtaheeds.

In the evening I had a regular levee, attended by the principal merchants of the place. They seemed very pleasant and intelligent, and I think this is the case with all the upper classes in Persia. While all the others were there, Mahamad Hoosen came to see me, and was the same as I found him before, very gentlemanly mannered. Without going out of his way to be profuse

in his offers of service, he has done all I could reasonably expect, and by the marked manner in which he has made his people attend to me, has no doubt prevented many unpleasantnesses which might otherwise have occurred with the inhabitants of the city, who are noted for their fanaticism.

While here I debated much with myself whether I should go from this to Ispahan, or extend my wanderings. I had now seen quite enough of Persian travel to have taken all the charm out of it. I could no longer delude myself that the country would prove more interesting. Practically, I had found that to travel in this country means to roam over bare burnt-up plains, and rough brown arid hills, with nothing to see at the beginning of the day's stage, or in the middle of it, or at the end.

The heat was also very great, and the glare something frightful, and on reaching one's stage but little alleviation of the suffering caused by them, could be extracted from the bad food and salt water that were my lot. But, on the other hand, if I went to Ispahan, I should be getting back to the civilization I dreaded; every step would take me nearer to that England I once so longed to visit again, but which was now haunted by remembrances of what might have been. The date, too, was close on the anniversary of that which two years before had rendered my life an utter blank, and little as I liked this life, I could not yet bring myself to face the other. So I determined to leave Yuzd and wander on. I had no settled plan. I thought I would at all events first make Tubbus, and then go on towards Mushudd, and I therefore sent a telegram to my friend Major Bates, to say I could not meet him in Russia this season at all events.

I left Yuzd for Tubbus on the morning of the 8th of May, but did not get off till late, it being fully eight before I was clear of the city. This made the march to Anjeeruk an extremely hot and unpleasant one. Almost directly, or about two miles after leaving the city by the Nurunj Kulla, you get into as perfect desert as any part of the Sahara, the road goes over heavy sand at first and this seems fast encroaching on the comparatively small patch of cultivation of which Yuzd consists. About four miles out it crosses a ridge of hard sand, and thence to Howz Jofar, ten miles from Yuzd, is a succession of hard sand, gravel ridges; and heavy soft sand hollows. Here I had breakfast, as the water is good (from two ab-ambars). It would have been better if I had halted here for the first night. After leaving this the road enters the hills seen north of Yuzd, which are called Koo-y-Taroona, and ascends very gradually over stones and gravel up a valley enclosed by steep, rugged, and bare hills on either side. At six miles a river bed is crossed, and then there is an almost imperceptible rise to the watershed between this valley and the next. So slight was this ascent, that for some time it appeared as if the river bed itself was on the crest of the watershed, which is, I believe, never the case. The road then descends very easily to Anjeeruk, the general direction of the march being NNE. and NE. and the distance not far short of 22 miles. The hills here seem to be distinct from each other, and are only connected by very slight ridges of earth or sandstones. This makes it extremely difficult to trace their connection, and indeed, I do not think this could ever be done satisfactorily except by an accurate survey. This reminds me that there seems no reason why the whole of Persia should not be regularly surveyed; the officials seem to be

absolutely careless as to your motives in going about, and you may always ascend any hill you like, without aught worse happening to you than being placed in the category of "mad Englishmen." There seems to be absolutely none of that exclusiveness which distinguishes other orientals, and in asking questions from Persians you may always expect to get, at least as intelligent and truthful answers as you would get in any other country; and these are given without the slightest hesitation. While, therefore, nothing can justify us in not long ago having had a reliable map of this country, nothing but apathy should prevent us from making one now.

The Naib-ool-Hookoomut sent with me five sowars. They were a different lot from the Bukhtiarees I had with me from Sheeraz. They call themselves Arabs, and come from Ardistan, but are not such soldierly looking fellows, and their whole turn out is inferior.

This place, Anjeeruk, is merely a caravanserai, with a spring of good water, and a gentleman who dispenses barley and chaff (not metaphorical) from a tower hard by. The serai is an excellent one, built throughout of well burnt brick. It is 80 yards square, has double rows of arched niches all round, and could easily hold 400 men. The curious feature of it is that there is not a single bit of wood employed in its construction. The road thence to Khuranuck is as eminently uninteresting as the last, the same rocky hills and stony valleys without an appearance of vegetation or sign of a living being.

The road leaves in a direction of 25°, and at one mile passes the old serai and an "ab-ambar;" then it ascends easily over the neck of a hill for one and a half miles. It then descends very easily over gravel for one mile, and follows an open valley running E. and W. At one and a half miles it passes the Howz-y-Sufeid which is in

ruins, and has no water. Four and a half miles onward it goes through a low gravel ridge, and shortly after passes another old "howz" with no water. At thirteen and a half miles it enters another low gravel ridge, and passing on the left, the road to the well of Chah Now (two miles off, with water); it ascends by an easy gradient to the top of a ridge in two and a quarter miles. Next it descends very gradually over gravel, through a sort of plateau, and arrives, at the end of seven miles further, at Khuranuck. The water supply here is good, and there is an excellent serai, but supplies are scarce.

The country passed on this day was just like that which one sees from the deck of a P. and O. steamer going up the Red Sea. I still had the same difficulty in this march in discovering the connection of the ranges. The Koo-y-Taroona ridge is turned by the road to Khuranuck and is on the right as you go to that place, and, on the left is a similar ridge, Koo Khuranuck running parallel with it the whole way. If these ridges are connected, it must be somewhere further to the west, as I am sure I never passed any watershed uniting them.

The Koo Khuranuck, is another range of hills which is said to start from the village of Khuranuck, and to run in the direction of Ardekan on the west. They run E. and W., and shut out all view to the north, are composed of rock, and are exceedingly steep and rugged There are two small villages on the north side named Homeen, and Sinjat, and, it is said, there is no "Kuveer" beyond them, but a stony valley, with hills on the north called the Seeah Koli, which is high and has snow on it.

The worst of this country is that, bad as it is, one cannot conceive how it could be improved, in any single

way. There is no water, it produces absolutely nothing, and there is no possibility of water being collected for irrigation. Sufficient water for drinking could certainly be obtained almost anywhere, by means of those very excellent institutions called "ambars" more to the west; but which are now begining to be called Howzes,* and perhaps, a large amount of water could be procured by the same means for irrigation. The cost, however, would be enormous, and even if water could be furnished the soil is too sandy to promise any profitable return; then again, there are no people. Everywhere I have been, with a few exceptions, every bit of available land has been cultivated, and it seems that the whole available population is taken up in doing so. So I do not see where the men would be found for any new schemes of improvement; and this applies to other things besides cultivation, for instance, to the rage to make railroads in Persia. Unless it can be proved that a mortal once having heard the whistle of an engine cannot again know happiness till he has railways all over his own country, I do not see what Persia wants with railways. The produce of this part of the country is a mere nothing, and there is already sufficient and suitable transport for all the exports there are. If any improvements are really required, I should say, first let the roads to the south be improved, so as to make them easily practicable for camels and mules, and after that introduce light carts into northern Persia, where the roads are already almost fit for them. Indeed, it was only to-day in going over a low ridge, that I noticed for the first time the track of wheels, and on inquiring was told that a carriage had gone over the road a few months ago with women for Mushudd.

* Howz is a tank.

At Khuranuck none of the villagers could remember ever having heard of any "Sahib" having been there before; but when I told them that Captain Christie had passed through sixty-five years before, one aged individual pretended he had heard of him. Be this as it may, there is no doubt Christie did go through Khuranuck. There is one thing, however, I do not understand in his route. He states Khuranuck to be only 27 miles from Yuzd, while I make it by careful timing 44 miles, and as he does not mention Anjeeruk, which, it may be noted, was a stage in his day, as is proved by a route of Kinneir's in my work on Persia, I can only conclude that he has missed out one stage altogether in his account.

The village of Khuranuck is situated in a little oasis about one mile square, surrounded by a wilderness of rugged impracticable hills and desolate valleys, at the south foot of the Khuranuck range. It has eighty houses, which are enclosed in a fort, slightly raised above the level of the ground in the immediate vicinity. There is an excellent caravanserai here, built of good brick, and capable of accommodating four hundred men. Some supplies are procurable, and there is abundance of water, which, however, is slightly brackish.

There is no other village nearer than Sowgund, on the north, or Ardekan, about forty-five miles to the west on a bearing of 255°.

10th May.—The road from Khuranuck descends at once into the ravine of the same name, and goes through a defile with low hills on either side for eight miles; at the fourth mile there is some water. It then goes over a plain of gravel for eight miles, to the Howz Boolund, where, however, there is no water, and for five miles more to the Howz Meantak (no water). It then ascends

very gradually for eight miles to Rezab, where good shelter is procurable, but no supplies, and only indifferent water.

From Rezab the road ascends gradually to the neck of a range of hills, which are reached in six miles, and then, turning more north, it winds through hills to the end of the stage. Here good water is procurable, and a few supplies might be collected. The serai at this place is excellent.

This long march of forty miles consists principally in crossing an extensive plain, which slopes to the centre, from the Khuranuck range to that of Rezab. These two ranges have no apparent connection, as far as could be seen, though it is possible that it may take place in the north. There is one feature of these hills which is noteworthy, as it is not found in other hills in Persia, or in any other hills that I have seen elsewhere. They attain a very considerable height above the sea, as much as 8,000 or 9,000 feet; but do not rise high out of the slopes at their feet, and all the hills are divided from the next ridge by the same sort of long glacis slope, which slopes down from both, uniformly, to the mutual water-course, unbroken by any spur, unrelieved by a single undulation. There is thus, in fact, between these hills no ground which is quite level. The hills themselves are quite bare rock, without a particle of soil of any kind, and it seems, indeed, there is no doubt it is the case, as if all the soil had been washed off them, to provide the glacis slopes, which are composed in all cases of earth and gravel. So imperceptible, however, are the slopes, that when you are on them they seem level, and it is only when a long way off that you see what a decided slope these glaces all have. In these valleys and hills there is so little water naturally that it may almost

be said not to exist; for instance, between Yuzd and Sowgund, a distance of over fifty miles, there are three springs only. At other places, as at Howz-y-Jafun and Rezab, are artificial supplies, and these, as I have said, could be increased almost indefinitely, as it is only necessary to take advantage of the natural slope of the hills to enable all the drainage of the rain to be caught in as many howzes as may be required. These howzes are most excellent institutions, and might, I think, be introduced with great advantage elsewhere. They consist merely of a long, narrow, deep underground tank, which is dug out in a position to catch the drainage from the hills (which is further conducted to it by embankments), and then carefully roofed over and covered with earth, only one small entrance being left. As the water which goes into these is generally owing to the winter rains, and is afterwards carefully excluded from all sun and heated air, it is always deliciously cool. One improvement might be made in them, and that is to erect a windlass and bag, by which water could be got up and run off into a trough a little way off, so as to prevent animals staling near them, as I have noticed that there are places where not only every animal drinks, but also stales, and doubtless much of the urine percolates through the soil into the tank.

The village of Sowgund is situated round a spring of excellent water, in the midst of a howling wilderness of stony hills and plains. It has about sixty houses, enclosed in a fort with high walls, which would be sufficient protection against Baloche robbers, but is in too dilapidated a state to offer any resistance to a regular attack. A few supplies are procurable here, and there is an excellent serai. Thence there is a direct road to Beabunnuck, sixty miles.

The chief man of the village came to see me, and said that Shah Abbass had given it the name Soo-Kund, because of its sweet water, its full and proper name, therefore, was Soo-Kund-y-Shah. I replied that the story I heard was very different, viz., that on arriving here and seeing what an uninviting place it was, Shah Abbass had sworn (Sowgund-Khoord*) that he would never come again, and therefore it was called Sowgund-y-Shah, an opinion in which I certainly agreed with his majesty. Perhaps I did not explain my meaning very well, for the old gentleman at the moment only rewarded my sally by a vacant look. However, in the evening he came back, splitting with laughter, and saying, "I see it now, Sowgund-Khoord. Ha, ha!"

11*th May*.—Another long march. The day before I had started rather late, but had been severely punished for my delay by the frightful heat of the last three hours of the march, as I did not get in till past four. Next day, therefore, I set off earlier, but did not get in till twelve hours after my departure. There is very little to impress these marches on one's mind, and consequently very little to be said of them. Indeed, if I had not everywhere made notes of any change, I should two days after have forgot that there ever had been one. First, there was a descent, close to some rocky hills, to Allahabad, fifteen miles. This place, mentioned by Christie as a stage, is, however, now ruined, and has no water. It was burnt by the Baloches in a raid about twenty years ago, and has never been occupied since. This is a pity, as an intermediate stage is certainly required. The road went over one immense plain, stretching to the north-west and south-east, farther than one could see, and was just as uninteresting as the preceding day's journey.

* Sowgund is an oath.

There is water only at one place, in forty-two miles, viz., Howz Charfarsukh, about twelve miles from Poosht-y-Budam. This last is a hideous village, at the bottom of an equally hideous stony valley. It, however, has a good deal of cultivation round it, and must be allowed to have good water, which in Persia is a good deal; and if to this we add a good caravanserai, it may seem unreasonable not to be satisfied. When I say that the caravanserai is good, I mean that the building is excellent, and of the same plan as at all other stages on this road, but it is like nearly every serai in Persia, filthily dirty. To show a Persian's idea of this state of affairs, I may mention that I asked the Khet Khoda why he did not clean it up. "Clean it up?" said he, with a vacant look, and then turning to my "peshkhidmut," he said, "Tell him it's a caravanserai," as if that should account for any amount of filth. "But," I said, "we have plenty of serais in India, and they are always cleaned." He only shook his head, and said, "No doubt;" but he looked as if he meant to add, "but then you are a queer people and have queer customs." This place takes its name from the bitter almonds (budam) with which the neighbouring hills abound, and the meaning of the word is "almond shells," meaning, I should say, it is as devoid of all that is calculated to make life bearable as empty almond shells.

My dear reader, you must forgive me this cynical mood, but it is owing to the state of mind engendered by a stage such as I had made on this day. It is all very well to decry cynicism, but when one has been meandering for twelve hours over endless plains of stone, without a green thing or living animal on them, without a soul to speak to, with the sun 115° searching out and scorching every part of one's wretched frame, and

one has only had a glass of brackish water all the time, I think forgiveness may be accorded.

There is a ruined fort here, which, however dilapidated, affords some protection to the inhabitants against the Baloche marauders who come up from the Loot.

The headman of this secluded village said that about fourteen years ago the Shah of India had come through here, after having been deprived of his country by the English. I could not at first make out who this king was, till at last it dawned on me that it must be Feroze Shah, a rebel of the Delhi family. He appears to have become afterwards as distinguished a liar as he proved himself in 1858-59 an eminently slippery skedaddler. He told these people that after fighting us for years in several awful battles in which he lost in the aggregate 400,000 men, he was at last obliged to give in. He came from Yuzd and went to Mushudd, whence he continued his journey to Bokhara and Khokand, to see, no doubt, if he could get any help. They did not know what had become of him afterwards, or whether he is now alive or not.

From Poosht-y-Budam the road to Tubbus goes on to Robat-i-khan, but there was a place mentioned in my work as "Biabanak," said to be a district in the middle of the "Kuveer," with villages and cultivation, and as it was said to be the same distance as Robat, and would, I thought, only lengthen my march a day, I thought it worth a visit. I hoped to learn something new about this great desert the "Kuveer," and its practicability for travellers; also, by going off to the west, to find out more of the lie of this range of hills, and finally, I knew no European had ever been there. For these reasons, on the 13th of May, I committed myself to another forty miles of stony plain. Somehow I had con-

ceived an idea that I was going to find a beautiful oasis in the middle of a desert, and as we ranged for the last seven miles over low sand ridges, each one of which promised to be the last, but was not, I kept hoping that at length we should come to something that would reward us. At last we did come to the final ridge, and saw before us a few hundred hideous date palms. The place looked at first like those sweet spots one sees on the coast of the Red Sea or Persian Gulf. Indeed, the whole plain, the low ridges and rocky hills only wanted water letting in to complete the delusion. Anything more abominable than this place, Beyaza, which is one of seven other deserts which compose the delectable district of Beeabunnuck, it is impossible to conceive. I was put up in as good a room as could be found, but it was frightfully hot all day, so directly the sun went down I got my bed out on to the roof, much, no doubt to the astonishment—and I hope I may add, the delight—of the fair sex of Beyaza. There was a most extortionate and impertinent ruffian here, who charged me for fowls almost the same price as you would pay for a fine capon during the London season, and because we would not give him all he asked, he called out (not to me) we were all robbers. I paid him out by getting him up and then telling him a few unpleasant truths, which made him very uncomfortable. There was, however, a very nice intelligent young man, who made up for all the other disagreeables of the place, and he gave me a great deal of information about it and the roads from it.

Beeabunnuck is a sub-division of Semnan, Khoor being its principal place. It has eight villages—viz., Khoor; Junduck, fifteen farsakhs north of Beyaza, with fifty houses; Ferukhi, forty houses, three farsangs north; Gurmab, five farsangs; Oordeeb, forty houses, six far-

sangs west; Iraj, seven farsangs west, fifty houses; Mehrjan, 100 houses, six farsangs east; and Beyaza, sixty houses, ten farsangs from Khoor.

These are all situated separately, generally at the foot of hills in the midst of a howling wilderness. There is no village of the name of Beeabunnuck, or hills or valleys; but it is only a collection of small oases, having no topographical connection with each other. It is also not in the middle of the salt desert, but fifty miles away from it. I suppose there are not eight such desolate villages in the world. The sub-division has absolutely no importance. From this it is sixty farsangs* to Semnan, while Naeen is forty-five farsangs; Yuzd, fifty farsangs; and Tubbus, forty farsangs.

Though situated to the south of the Kuveer, it is, as I have said, in the sub-division of Semnan, which is on the Tehran and Mushudd route, and which is approached by a regular road, which crosses a bit of Kuveer of about eighty miles without water. I asked why it was attached to Semnan, being so far away, and he said, "It is far away from everywhere, and on every side is desert." And so it is. There is no oasis, as we usually understand the word, but these eight villages stand on the edge of the plain at the foot of the different bare hills round, on patches of about a square mile of green each, all the country round being a waste of the most desolate description it is possible to conceive.

On the 14th, as we had had such tremendous marches for the last five days, I made a short journey of fourteen miles to Arasoon, a small hamlet. There my tent was pitched by a small tank of clear water, under what little shade was afforded by a few date palms. I was fully employed all day writing up my journals and route, plotting

* About 3½ miles.

out my map, and correcting and adding to the gazetteer. All this takes longer time than I thought it would, and I find I am in no want of occupation, especially as I occupy all spare moments in inquiring about the routes and country, and in reading up the "Gulistan," the only Persian book I have got. I find that during these long marches I have got into arrears more or less with everything; and no wonder, if one thinks of the time they take. For instance: 3-4 A.M., preparing; 4 A.M.-4 P.M., marching; 4-5 P.M., bathing; 5-6 A.M., eating and smoking: 6-7, out on some high building or ground taking bearings, or talking about the country; 7-8, dinner; 8-10, writing; then sleep. There is thus not much time to spare, and so I have determined to avoid marches of over twenty-five miles, or six hours. If there had been much to write about the country I have passed through during the last five days, I could not have recorded all about it.

From Arasoon we went to Khoor on the 15th, about twenty-four miles north, over the same sort of ground. The road on leaving the village winds round the hill, and, ascending gradually, goes over a neck at three miles and a half; at five miles it crosses a dry water-course, draining to the north-east, and thence passes over a stony plain for five miles. It then crosses a low spur of the Koh Chastab range, and at thirteen and a half miles passes a "howz" with water—road good. Thence, in half a mile, it goes over a ridge, and, two miles farther, over another; then over undulating ground covered with gravel for five miles to Khoor.

Khoor is a small oasis about two miles in diameter, in which there are 400 houses of Persians, Arabs, and Syuds, and a dense forest of date palms. It is extremely

hot here, the thermometer going up to 105° in my room —a fact which made me think what an ass I was to be roaming over deserts where I might be comfortable in my club in town. I am sure I do not like this life; it is quite as hard work as any campaign I ever was in, and the heat has really been dreadful for the last week. The sun begins to get hot about 7 A.M., and never ceases for an instant till 6 A.M. to blaze down on you. I suppose some day it will come in useful to Government to know really what this part of the world is like; and it is the feeling that unless some private individual gets information for them, our Government will never obtain it for themselves, which induces me to continue my wanderings. I do not hesitate to say, that the apathy of our Government is to me quite astonishing. If they were in possession of the most perfect information regarding the whole of the battlefield which will one day settle their fate, they could not be more regardless of fresh investigations; and perhaps it is the English feeling that if Government won't do it I will, that brings me here—that is to say, to these exact parts. For the real purpose for which I came, any part of Asia would suit me as well—anywhere that would take me away from European associations.

Khoor is situated in the midst of a waste of stony plains and rocky hills, which, if small villages are excepted, stand all round it for a radius of from 150 to 200 miles. The houses are of mud, but there are a few "badgeers" to relieve the monotony of the scene. Supplies are procurable, but the water is salt, and fresh water has to be brought from a distance of ten miles. It has no importance other than that it seems to be a place to which roads from all places north of the "Kuveer" concentrate; thus there are roads from it to Semnan, Bearj-

nand, Subzwar, Nishapur, and also to Tubbus, Yuzd, and Naeen. The heat here in summer is very great, probably owing to the radiation from the glaring hills round, and on the 14th May the thermometer stood at 112° in a house; but its elevation is nevertheless sufficient to secure for it occasionally a fall of snow.

CHAPTER V.

KHOOR TO TUBBUS.

THE next day I marched to Mehrjan. The reason of this was because I was told that I could get no camels at Khoor to carry the water that would be necessary to take me across the waterless tract which stretches between Beeabunnuck and Tubbus. Whereas, as Reza said, "there will be no difficulty in Mehrjan, and you can go off from there in the greatest comfort." "Are there many camels in Mehrjan?" inquired I, doubtingly. "Camels," replied he, "the place is full of them; in fact, they are a perfect nuisance, there are so many of them." "Very good, let us go." We went off, guided by an individual who, to my thinking, looked too fat and sleepy to know much outside his own zenana; but who informed me he had spent a lifetime in wandering about this district and knew every stone. Unfortunately, this statement was doomed to be cruelly shown to be false very shortly. We started and as usual I got on ahead, and coming to two roads, took the one to the right, as it seemed most like the direction to Mehrjan; when I heard a loud voice call, "Sahib, the left road is the one." I turned and waited, and when he came up said, "Are you quite sure?" "Sure, oh yes, it goes up there and then over that neck you can just see." So, on we went, towards the neck, when, after an hour, my friend began to zigzag in an ominous

manner. "What is the matter?" I called out, "have you lost the road?" "No, oh no, only it is a little dark." (N.B.—A bright moon shining.) After a little more of this he said, "I think we have come a little too high." "Of course you have," said I. "I knew you went wrong at the two roads; now, although I have not, thank heaven, been, like you, wandering about these d—d stones since my childhood, I will show you the way." The fact was that two days before I had had two good shots at Mehrjan, and had fixed it in my map, and so getting it out I found the direction, and struck boldly off, and was rewarded after two miles, for on getting to the top of a low pass, the village appeared in the distance.

On entering this reputed abode of camels, I noticed there was not one apparent, either in or out of the village; so I remarked to Reza, "Where are the camels?" "They are coming directly, they are ordered according to your directions." However, they never came, and so, hour after hour, when I inquired, there was the same answer, coming directly, the camels are eating or drinking, or being saddled, or the man is doing the same, or girding up his loins. At last, abruptly, a man came to say I could have camels in the morning, but there were no water-skins. These were got soon, but the ruffian still persisted in refusing to go till next morning. Then he said he must have three tomams* each, half paid here, half at Tubbus; this too was granted, and then he said he must have all down or he could not start. All this put off all chance of my getting off that day, and next day it was the same, till at last I lost patience, and said to my useless Persian servants, who all this while were smoking their kaloons,

* Tomam, a Persian gold coin of the value of £2 10s.

"Very good, I will not take any camels, but will carry the water on the mules, and you shall walk." On hearing this, they jumped up, rushed about in a frantic state, and abused the camel-man, and at last got him to agree. "But," I said, "it is too late now; when I make up my mind to a course I stick to it, and so you shall all walk."

Having got here, the difficulty was to get out of it, without going back. I find, a good deal to my astonishment, I have got to the north of Tubbus; but of all the roads to that place there is the same story—no water. However, to-morrow I am going to have a try round by Mehrjan, one of the villages of Beeabunnuck. How men can be got to live in such places beats my comprehension, and yet they like it. One would be rather inclined to think that an Emigration Society would have lots of work here, but I don't believe one of these people would go. They would sooner have Khoor, with its salt water, bad dates, and blazing sun, than any other you could offer them. It seems to me this is generally the case; people who live in the worst places are just those who do not want to leave, and I regard it as a dispensation of Providence that it is so; for nice places are like nice people, few and far between, and if all the inhabitants of the nasty places wanted to come to the few nice ones, it would be time to go out of the world altogether. The hills are the most difficult to trace of any I have seen, and though the atmosphere is beautifully clear in the mornings it becomes very deceptive after the sun gets up. To give an instance of this: at this place I took the bearings all round, and noticed that in one direction the horizon seemed perfectly clear, so I wrote, "horizon open, no hills;" but in the evening I went out again and found what I had

supposed was an open plain to be clearly encircled by hills.

The only thing which I observed about Khoor different from other places is that the women all wear white sheets instead of blue. I asked Reza if that was a sign of virginhood, and he laughed and said no, pointing out a ghost-like figure from whose shroud a baby's head appeared; so I suppose it is either because indigo is up, or that these women really are of a greater purity than those of more habitable spots. I observed a great difference between the women of the towns and those of the villages. The first, while they screen themselves, always take good care to have a good look at you; the second often seem too frightened to look at all, but turn their faces to the wall.

I let my sowars go away from here. They have not been anything like as good men as the last; in fact they were useless, and as I have to carry water and supplies for a sufficiently large party already, this seemed a good opportunity to be rid of them.

Mehrjan is a village in the Beeabunnuck division of Semnan, situated in the middle of a plain surrounded on all sides by waste, there being no villages nearer than fourteen miles on the west; to the north and east there are none for one hundred miles. It is a miserable place of one hundred houses, with an old tumble down fort, and many date trees. The water is indifferent and supplies are not readily procurable; in fact, it owes its only importance to the fact of its being the last village to the north and east before coming to the desert.

The march which I was about to make, in order to get out of this delectable subdivision, would take me by the route on which there was most water, yet the first water reached was twenty farsakhs, or sixty to seventy

miles off. I had strong doubts whether it could be done by the mules, but was very loth to go back by the road I came, so I determined to risk it. We started at 5 P.M. on the 18th, and I made the servants walk the first few miles. For ten miles the road lay over a waste of gravel, which was succeeded by five miles of kuveer or salt desert, then two miles of gravel again, when we came to an old howz, called Howz Mirza, with no water. The next ten miles was gravel, and then we came to sand for seven miles. This was very heavy, and the animals laboured severely over it, so that we all got off and walked, pushing forward as fast as we could, for as an old guide said, "For God's sake let us get over this before the sun is up." This we luckily accomplished, and got to the far edge just at daybreak. The sand is called "Sar-gardun," which means "lost head," that is, I suppose, that if you are caught on this tract when the sun is up you begin by losing your head figuratively, and end by losing it and your life actually. The guide said, a few years ago eighty pilgrims, men, women, and children, were lost in this desert. I can certainly quite believe this, of these people especially, as they never know or never look where they are going, and if they attempted this sand without a guide they might have gone on meandering over it, till the sun and thirst asserted their sway, and they dropped down to die; for there are very few people who ever cross it, and a man might die on this road and it would be days before his body was found.

We then halted, watered the mules, and fed them. Though this delayed us, it was absolutely necessary to do so, as we should never have got on if they had not been given water; and, in being able to bring enough with me, I was more than repaid for the expense of having more

mules than I had loads for. The men all drank greedily of the water, which was the best we could obtain, but I was not yet thirsty enough to be able to get the stinking bitter stuff down. After a short halt we went on, and, going some distance over the same gravel, came to a bit of real "Kuveer," which extended for the next twelve miles. It is rather difficult to suggest anything that will give an English reader an idea of what this "Kuveer" is. It is not sand, nor is it in the least like the desolate plains of India, which, burnt up as they may be, are luxuriant in their vegetation compared with Kuveer. It has, speaking quite literally, not one blade of grass, not one leaf of any kind, not a living thing of any sort. It is composed of dark soil, which looks as if it had been turned up by the plough a year before, but which is covered with a thick salt efflorescence, which glitters painfully to the eyes. All round, as far as the eye can reach, there is nothing to be seen but this glare of white, which seems to stare pitilessly on you as you pass by, crunching over its dry crust. Every here and there there is a dark patch, which on getting up to you find to consist of moist earth, which seems, as it were, to have sweated up from beneath. These patches also dry up, and then the salt shows. The surface of the Kuveer is not smooth, but is so honeycombed with small holes, about nine inches deep and the size of a man's head, that it is very difficult walking for animals; but, as the soil of the Kuveer binds very well, a good road could doubtless be made over it. The tract we were passing over is evidently a continuation of the great desert which commences east of Koom, and is supposed to stretch nearly due east to the north of Khoor. From near this it turns to the south and gradually lessens in width. It is

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probably broadest south of Damghan, there, being not less than 150 miles; but generally, at the points where it is crossed by roads, it is not more than eighty to one hundred. These points appear to be from Semnan to Khoor, Beajmand, Subzwar, and Nishapore, all of which routes I gave before. I have not got any route separate to Damghan, and I am informed that there is none; as the Damghan road is the same as the Semnan till the Kuveer is crossed. It may be asked if nothing could be done to improve this tract; and I may safely answer, nothing. Nothing—that is—that would pay. A good deal might be done in the way of improving the water supply, so as to make it more practicable for travellers, and perhaps also in the way of collecting a few supplies; but my impression is, that to do this for any large body of men, would not only not pay, but not succeed; and therefore we may regard the Kuveer as a barrier far more impracticable than any hills; far more impassable than any sea, between the districts of Koom and Kashan on the west, and Tubbus and Toorshez on the east; between Semnan, Beajmund and Subzwar on the north, and Yuzd, Naeen and Beeabunnuck on the south. Of course, for small bodies of men, for messengers, for whom adequate arrangements can be made for water, the Kuveer need not be more than an extremely disagreeable feature in a hideously desolate route; but it should never be attempted except with camels.

When the Kuveer ceased we came again to sand, and here our sufferings, which had gradually been increasing, culminated. It was already nine, and we had fifteen or sixteen miles before us, and the sun was extremely hot even at that hour. I could not stand going without water any longer, and so drank off a tumbler of the salt liquid we had with us. We then pushed on, very

slowly comparatively; the animals were all but done; the sun was very trying, registering 120° in the shade; a hot wind was blowing, that seemed to frizzle up one's very liver, and carried with it particles of fine sand, that got into one's eyes and prevented seeing—into one's nostrils, which, as we dared not open our mouths, prevented one breathing freely; so that at last one was obliged to open one's mouth for breath, and receive with it a peck of fine sand, to add to the aridity of an already too parched throat. I had to stop every now and then to let the mules come up with me, and on these occasions the heat was really dreadful, and the sand was so hot that I had constantly to change feet; while my poor horse every now and again put his nose to his scorched hoof inquiringly, to see what caused the fierce burning. In this way we struggled on, the hours seeming ages, the hazy distance appearing interminable, and the devilish mirage ever dancing merrily in front, with its false water and shady trees. At twelve I stopped, and waiting for the guide, tried to ask him how far it was, when I found my throat and palate had become so parched that I could barely get the words out. I looked round at my servants. Except my excellent butler, Pascal, who looked quite cheerful, all the others had got a sort of dull, leaden look, which showed they had got beyond the stage of caring much what became of them. The guide replied, it was close now, and the water at the stage was good, and would soon put us all right; so we pushed on, and at 1.15 sighted our stage, which is called Chah Mehjee. It was in reality but a ruined mud tower over a well, but if it had been a paradise it could not have been more welcome. We all rushed for the well, to find, to our horror, the water 100 feet deep and no rope; however,

we found a way down to the water, and Rafeek soon brought up a mussuck. I held out my mug to him, and as he poured it, it came out so clear and sparkling, and felt so cool to the hand, that at last I felt satisfied our misery was over. Seizing it, I held it up and tossed off the first three or four mouthfuls before I discovered it was more bitter than what we had with us. This was what may in truth be called a bitter disappointment, and so we tried it in tea and found that no amount of sugar or strength could drown its horrible taste. I was again in the depths of despair, as there was no other water of any kind for twenty miles. But I was again to be deceived by appearances, this time, however, joyfully. Among the cooking things I espied a jar, which I had used for photography, but which I had ordered to be left behind at Sheeraz with the rest of my apparatus, but which had been brought in and used as a cooking pot. "Now," I said to my men, "I will give you a glass of sweet water." "How are you going to do that?" said Reza, with a smile. I said, "Here, taste this—it is bitter, is it not? Very well, I will put it in this pot, and in an hour or so it will have become sweet." I then made some bottles of distilled water, and, having cooled them in the well, gave him some. He tasted, acknowledged it was quite sweet, but could not make it out at all, and I think thought me uncanny ever after. I cannot say distilled water is nice, but I do not know that I ever enjoyed anything in the shape of liquor so thoroughly as I did this first bottle. I did not gulp it down, but lingered over each mouthful —let each slide quietly down, after the fashion of old topers with a glass of good La Rose. I think it will be allowed we had had enough misery for one day, but even now our miseries were not over. I must say I

thought that we had enough of it, and, having got my water, I sat pretty contented curled up in a corner of the tower waiting till it got cool enough to go out and have a bath. About five this delicious moment came, and I enjoyed my tub thoroughly, and was just commencing to dry myself when a wind came on suddenly and blew away all the things off my bed; I rushed after these, and before I came back found we were in for a regular sand storm. There was no shelter; I was very nearly *in puris naturalibus*, and my clothes were, heavens only knows where! There was nothing for it but to back the storm—I was going to say face it, but remember never to face a sand storm—and there I stood motionless, but patient, one hand over my eyes, one over my mouth, and my head bent low, while the wind blew, and masses of sand struck my bare back. In a case of this sort there is nothing for it but to be quiet; and after a little more than an hour we were rewarded: the storm first lessened and then stopped, and I—forgive my apparent vanity—went to look at myself in the glass. What I saw nearly frightened me. Surely that black individual, with muddy hair, dirty rims round his eyes, and gritty teeth, wasn't me! When the storm began I was wet, and the sand had blown on to me, so that I looked like a Hindoo fakeer, who covers his body with dust and cakes his hair with mud. Any way it took me four days to get the sand out of my hair. I was nearly cutting it all off, but could not raise a pair of scissors. A beautiful evening then set in, the wind blew gently and coolly, and I enjoyed such a sleep as I had not had for years.

The well of Chah Mehjee is situated on a waste of sand hills, and it would be impossible to conceive anything more desolate than its situation. The well is

very deep, about 150 feet, and the water is very salt. A few yards off is an underground communication with the water, a most unnecessary, laborious work, as it can easily be pulled up by a rope. There is any amount of fuel in the vicinity of this place.

The desert I had thus successfully crossed, is not impossibly a continuation of the great salt desert of Persia, but I do not think it goes on beyond this towards the east or south, as there is none on the direct road from Poosht-y-Budam to Shorab. The bit of actual "Kuveer" I crossed was not less than twelve or thirteen miles in breadth. On the Tehran-Ispahan road, the other end of this Kuveer is crossed, and here it is said to be about ten miles in breadth. The only other point where it has been crossed by a European was by the Russian Buhsé, who stated there was only seven miles of "Kuveer" on the Yuzd-Damghan road. The fact is, that the breadth is nowhere the same, and I see every reason for doubting that there is one continued salt desert east of Koom, and think that it is much more likely that the salt lies in patches, as it is in the nature of this efflorescence only to occur at the lowest parts not actually covered with water; and I think it is more probable that there are many Kuveers formed by the rivers draining from the west, north, and east, than that there is one huge depression into which all this drainage flows.

Khanikoff gives a terrible account of the desert between Nehbundan and Kirman; but we must allow a little for the oriental imagination of his nation.

From Ambar—

"Un pays triste et nu s'étendait devant nous; une serie de mamelons sablonneux denués de toute végétation s'élevait audessus d'une plaine argileuse, dont le sol ré-

sonnait sourdement sous les pieds des chevaux, comme s'il recouvrait un gouffre. L'air était chaud, et un vent d'ouest extrêmement violent nous lançait au visage des nuées de poussière fine composée d'argile, de sable et de sel; ce dernier surtout la rendait insupportable pour les yeux. Heureusement cette bourrasque cessa bientôt, et nous débouchâmes dans une vallée elliptique entourée de monticules et couverte de broussailles, de tamaris et de haloxylon. Elle était sillonnée de traces laissées par le passage des torrents, et quelquesuns de ces sillons étaient encore humides, chose assez extraordinaire, car depuis trois semaines il n'était pas tombé d'eau dans les environs. Cette vallée conduisit à une gorge étroite bordée de deux côtés des rochers élevés; on l'appelle Gueloui-Saoudagher, c'est-à-dire 'gosier de marchand.'

"En sortant de cette gorge, qui n'est pas longue, on voit devant soi le désert dans toute son immense uniformité, mais non encore dans toute l'horreur de son aridité. Quoiqu'ici déjà le sol prenne le caractère uniforme qu'il conserve sur toute l'etendue du Lout, c'est-à-dire qu'il consiste en un sable grisâtre à gros grains, étendue sur une couche sablonneuse cimentée en matière rendue compacte par une solution de sel, la terre n'est pas encore entièrement dénuée de végétation. Toute chétive qu'était cette végétation, nos botanistes constatèrent avec étonnement quelles plantes des déserts de la Transoxiane que nous avons constamment rencontrées jusqu'alors, avaient brusquement disparu, et qu'elles étaient remplacées par des plantes speciales aux stores de l'Arabie et de l'Egypte. La seule chose qui rende l'aspect du Lout un peu moins désolant que celui des deserts de la Transoxiane c'est que dans aucune de ses parties l'horizon ne prend la forme monotone d'un immense cercle absoluement régulier,

comme c'est le cas dans beaucoup d'endroits de la steppe kirghise. Ici, soit au sud, soit à l'ouest, on voit poindre dans le lointain quelques montagnes, qui, semblables à des nuages bleuâtres, rompent la régularité fatigante de la limite visible de la plaine, et inspirent au voyageur l'assurance consolante qu'il ne risque pas de s'égarer dans l'immensité d'une solitude dont tous les points se ressemblent. Une heure avant le coucher du soleil, nous tournâmes un monticule appelé Mihibakhton, couronné de rochers, et nous nous arretâmes dans un endroit situé à un demi-farsang d'une chaîne de montagnes rocheuses. Trois bassins naturels creusés dans les rochers de cette chaîne conservent quelquefois assez longtemps l'eau pluviale qui s'y accumule.

"Nous nous remîmes en marche à onze heures du soir. La nuit était sombre, et nous errâmes pendant quelque temps; enfin, fort heureusement, notre conducteur réussit à s'orienter, et nous avançâmes sans déviation notable vers le but de notre seconde halte, qui était un endroit dit Balahouz. Au fur et à mesure que nous nous enfoncions dans le désert, le sol devenait de plus aride; au petit jour je distinguai encore quelques caligonum et quelques salsola desséchés, et non loin de là j'aperçus une alouette et un oiseau blanchâtre, derniers êtres vivants que nous vîmes dans cette triste solitude. Avec les premiers rayons du soleil, la chaleur commença à se faire sentir et s'accrut très rapidement. Les mamelons au-dessous desquels se trouvait Balahouz semblaient être à une portée de fusil; mais nous marchâmes des heures entières sans pouvoir les atteindre. Enfin, le matin du 4 avril, vers les onze heures, nous nous arrêtâmes à Balahouz par une chaleur suffocante. On voyait dans cette localité, quelques traces d'une cisterne ruinée, privée d'eau depuis longtemps. Ici le désert avait pris

completement son caractère de terre maudite, comme l'appellent les indigènes. Pas le moindre brin d'herbe, aucun sign de vie animale n'egayait la vue; aucun bruit autre que celui qu'engendrait la présence de la caravane ne venait rompre ce morne silence du néant.

" Grâce à la lenteur de la marche des chamaux, et à la perte de temps que nous éprouvâmes pendant que nous perdîmes la route, l'étage nocturne ne fut que de 25 kilométres. Après une halte de quatre heures, nous nous remîmes en marche, et nous nous dirigeâmes vers des mamelons dits Kellehper, éloignés de Balahouz de 20 kilomètres, mamelons qu'on voyait distinctement et qui semblaient positivement fuir devant nous. Ayant devancé la caravane, je m'assis au pied de cette élévation sablonneuse, et jamais je ne pourrai rendre le sentiment de tristesse et d'abattement dont je ne pus me garder à la vue de la lugubre solitude qui m'entourait. Des nuages dispersés voilaient les rayons du soleil, mais l'air était chaud et lourd; la lumière diffuse éclairait avec une uniformité désolante le sol grisâtre du désert fortement échauffé, et ne présentait presque aucune variation de teinte sur la surface immense que l'œil embrassait. L'immobilité absolue de tous les points de ce morne paysage, jointe à une absence complète de sons, produisait une impression accablante; on sentait que l'on se trouvait dans une partie du globe frappée d' une stérilité éternelle, où la vie organique ne peut reparaître que par suite de quelque bouleversement terrible. On assistait, pour ainsi dire, au commencement de l'agonie de notre planète.

" La seule chose qui nous consolait dans le désert, était la conscience d'avoir marché; les monts Mourghab, qui, la veille encore nous apparaissaient à l'horizon comme un brouillard sans forme déterminée, se dessinaient

nettement sur un ciel de plomb, et derrière eux s'élevait le mont Derbend, qu'on disait être rapproché de la limite du désert du côté de Yuzd. Bientôt après avoir dépassé Kellehper, nous descendîmes dans le lit desséché de la rivière de Khousse, où nos chameliers enfouirent dans la terre, à peu de profondeur de la surface, quelques provisions qu'ils se proposaient de reprendre à leur retour, étant sûrs que personne, pas même une bête fauve, ne viendrait les déterrer. Le coucher du soleil nous surprit dans cet endroit, et ce fut seulement à la nuit tombante que nous atteignîmes un ravin sablonneux, appelé Goudi-Nimeb, 'la dépression du milieu,' apres avoir parcouru dans l'après-midi vingt-quatre kilomètres. Cette localité est considérée par les indigènes comme le point exactement central du désert, quoique, par le fait, il ne se trouve qu'aux deux cinquièmes de la distance qui sépare Ambar de Dibiseif, points extrêmes du terrain privé d'eau. Ici quelques gouttes de pluie rafraîchirent un peu l'air, qui jusqu'alors, malgré la nuit, était chaud et même étouffant. A l'horizon occidental on voyait des nuages d'orage, illuminés parfois par des éclairs; mais le bruit du tonnerre n'arriva pas jusqu' à nous. Nous quittâmes cet endroit avant minuit, et parcourûmes jusqu' à l'aube du jour vingt kilomètres. Audelà, mamelon de sable dit Badriz, mot qui signifie, 'amorcelé par le vent,' et qui, très probablement, explique l'origine de cette colline, le désert change de caractère; la plaine unie est remplacée par une suite de terrasses sablonneuses et descendantes.

" Vers les onze heures du matin, le 5 avril, l'extrême chaleur nous obligea de nous arrêter dans un endroit dit Telli Kalendar, 'la terrasse des dervishes.'

" De l'emplacement où nous campions, on voyait une vaste dépression dont le fond était hérissé de rochers

isolés, et limitée à l'ouest par un plateau nommé Ghendoum Birian, ou 'blé rôti,' surnom rattaché à une autre histoire. Des brigands Beloudjs avaient attaqué et pillé dans cet endroit une caravane venant du Khorassan. Les moyens leur manquaient pour emporter tout le butin, et entre autre ils répandirent sur le sol une grande quantité de blé, se proposant de venir le reprendre quelques jours plus tard; mais quand ils retournèrent, ils virent que ce blé était brûlé par le soleil. Ce fait n'a rien d'improbable, car à midi trente minutes la température de l'air à l'ombre, et à trois quarts de métre audessus du sol, était de 39°,52 centigrades; le thermomètre mouillé marquait 20°,40 centigrades, et le baromètre se tenait à $729^{mm},48$; la température du mercure étant 29°,25 centigrades. Ces chiffres étant substitutés dans la formule de M. Régnault $f = \frac{0480}{610} \frac{t-t'}{-t'} h$, donnent pour la tension des vapeurs $6^{mm},045$, et pour l'humidité relative 11, $2p$ 100 de saturation complète à la tempèrature de l'air à l'ombre; ce resultat est de $0,8p$ 100 moindre que la sécheresse observée par le baron de Humboldt dans la steppe Barabinskaya, et qu'il regardait comme la plus grande sécheresse constatée sur la surface de la terre. Quant à la température du sol, elle était si forte, que même le pied chaussé la supportait difficilement.

"Nous étant mis en marche vers les deux heures de l'après-midi, nous descendîmes par une pente assez rapide dans la dépression que je viens de mentionner. Les rochers calcaires qui percent la surface de cette plaine basse, ont des formes bizarres; quelquesuns ressemblent à des maisons surmontées de coupoles, d'autres à des minarets, à des mosques, et à des murs crénelés, etc.; aussi nomme-t-on cet endroit Nagara Khana, le pavillon des tombaliers, chambre ouverte de

tous les côtes et placé audessus de la porte principale du palais. Peu d'instant avant le coucher du soleil, nous atteignîmes le bord meridional de cette depression ; il a la forme d' un mur vertical très élevé, large d'une vingtain de metres. Un sentier etroit très escarpé et travaillé en zigzag conduit au faite de ce rampart natural. L'ayant franchi à la lueur d' une lune de deux jours, nous descendimes dans la vallée d'un large cours d'eau sallée et amère, dit Chour-rond, qui se deverse dans une seconde depression située au sud de Baghi Assad, où le sel se depose en couches epaisses, et où il est recuilli par les habitants du bourg de Khabis et du village de Delu Saif. Le passage de ce ruisseau bombeux presenta quelque difficulté pour les chameaux, en sorte que nous fumes obligé de faire une halt un peu audelà de cet endroit, à 20 kilos de Telli Kalendar et à 55 de Gondy Nimah. D'après le temoignage de nos conducteurs nous avions une étage de 13 farsangs pour sortir complètement du desert, et nous nous decidâmes à la parcourir d'une traite et non en deux marches comme on le fait habituellement. Ayant donné aux chevaux le reste de nos provisions d'eau, nous quittâmes notre dernier campement dans le desert, non san éprouver quelque inquietude sur l'issue de notre resolution chanceuse. Heureusement la nuit du 6 avril etait claire et assez fraîche, en sorte que nous traversâmes avant l'aube matinale les endroits les plus difficiles à franchir par la chaleur qui y regne pendant le jour, tels que Koutche 'la rue,' surnommé ainsi à cause de deux rangées de mamelons regulièrement alignés des deux côtés de l' Assad, endroit où la route de Deli Salin s'unit à celle de Serichah, et enfin Regi Panj Angoosht—partie du desert remarquable par son carac-

tère mamelonné. Au petit jour nous passâmes près du mamelon dit Don. Douvanet.

" ***. Nous atteignimes enfin le bois de tamaris, et à 2 ou 3 kilos plus loin nous traversâmes un courant d'eau salée nommée Jooee Rosmee :—

" À 2 kilos plus loin on parvient au village de Deh-y-Seif.

" Nous avions marché pendent onze heures de suite, et nous avions parcouru depuis notre halte de la veille 61 kilos ; les hommes et les bêtes de somme etaient extenués de fatigue, et l'on comprendra facilement le bonheur que nous éprouvions à nous trouver sains et saufs sous le toit d'une habitation humaine, après avoir traversé un désert qui n'a pas d'égal en aridité sur toute la surface du continent asiatique, car le Gobi et le Kizil Koom, comparés au Lout, sont des prairies fertiles. J'ai vu depuis les mornes passages de l'isthme de Suez ; dans beaucoup d'endroits cette region aride semble être frappée de la même stérilité de que le Lout, mais elle ne garde pas ce caractère désolant sur une etendue aussi immense. On y rencontre parfois des sillons creusés par les pluies hivernales, où les graines des plantes herbacées parviennent à s'établir et la fructifier, et ce seul phénomène de la vie organique en evoque beaucoup d'autres du même genre et contribue à animer cette sentier déserte."

Next morning, 20th May, we left our bivouac early, and went over a waste of sandhills interspersed with gravelly hollows, to Doree, a single house at the west entrance of the Godar-y-Meean Pass, in a stony waste surrounded by an amphitheatre of hills. Here we found that supplies sufficient for my small party were procurable from a wretched individual who was crazy enough to make this place his home. The water, however, was still salt, and it was only after a great deal of

trouble that I got a skinful of fresh water by sending to a spring some three miles off.

This place is memorable to me also as being the scene of a serious mutiny of some of my Persian servants. The fact was, I suppose, they were all very sullen at the hardships of the last few days, and perhaps too much salt water has as trying an effect on one's temper as it has on one's digestion. Anyway, I could not get anything to eat that morning till very late, and on inquiring from my incomparable boy Pascal, he told me the cook had been very impertinent, had insinuated that his father and my father had been burnt, &c., and worst of all, flatly refused to do any work. As I did not care one bit about his thinking my father had been burnt, being an advocate of cremation, at first I thought it was no more than the usual display of laziness, to which I was almost becoming accustomed in my Persian servants, so I went up to him and told him to go to his work at once. His reply not being polite, I took him by the scruff of the neck, and pushed him towards the cooking-place. On this he broke loose, and turning on me in the most outrageously insolent manner, said, "What are you doing that for, you pidr-sokhta?* I *won't* work." I replied, "You *shall* work, so go at once." Thereon he called me a "Kafir,"† and said he would not work for any such. Now I have no sort of objection to being called a "Kafir," as that only means that I do not believe in an impostor called Mahomed, but there are ways of putting truths which

* Pidr-sokhta is literally burnt father; but as Orientals are given to indirect abuse, it probably means that the person to whom this epithet is applied is the son of a burnt father, *i.e.*, the son of a man who has been burnt in hell.

† Kafir means infidel or unbeliever, and is frequently employed by Mussulmans as a term of abuse.

are unpleasant so that they may appear almost compliments. Borzoo, the cook, unfortunately, did not put his sentiments in this way, but quite the contrary, so I knocked him down. He at once stooped, picked up a huge stone, and quick as thought hurled it at my head, and then, picking up another, stood ready. I thereupon rushed at him, and forced it out of his hand, but he got loose, and seizing another threw it at me, hitting me a sharp blow on the arm. Seeing that it had now become a question of who was to be master, I administered one from the shoulder, and his eye getting in the way of my fist, the result was that Borzoo somehow fell. Picking himself up, the ruffian then called on the others to join him, and seizing a sharp knife, which he always carried, but which he had put down among the cooking things, he again came at me, while some of the others followed him. I had no arms, as I was quite unprepared for this assault, so I stooped and picked up a big stone, and putting myself between my tent and the mutineers, I told my boy to run and get my pistol, and stood facing my friends. They, however, did not come on; they were disarmed also, except the cook, and he was not very far out, perhaps, when he thought that I with a big stone in my hand ready was quite a match for him; besides, they did not understand what I said to the boy. Immediately my stanch Pascal* appeared with the pistol, and taking it I said, "Put down that knife." As he did not do it immediately, I began lifting the pistol, when down it was thrown with considerable celerity. Then advancing towards him, keeping my eye on him the while, I got between him and the knife and again knocked him down.

* I have often heard these Portuguese boys are cowardly. All I can say, I never saw any one behave more coolly than Pascal did now.

He got up much sobered, so I said, "Now, you see, though there were four of you, you are not a match for an Englishman, so you had better go to your work at once." All went, even the cook, but to him I said, "You shall not work for me any longer; go away from here altogether," for I did not wish to be poisoned.

This affair I thought had blown over, for Borzoo went away, and Reza, the other mutineer, seemed to work with a will; but I was deceived, for on waking in the early morning preparatory to starting, the first thing I heard was that both had fled. On inquiring, I found no one knew what direction they had taken, so we started and made the next march and crossed a range of hills by a pass called the Godar-y-Meean, which was certainly the most decided elevation we had crossed since leaving Yuzd. Both the ascent and descent of this pass are quite easy, but the roadway is commanded by numerous fine positions for defence, and there is no water on it anywhere. Our halting place was at a hamlet called Safurria, where there were a couple of families, who lived in a large round tower when danger threatened, but generally dwelt in two small houses close by, and supported themselves by a patch of cultivation they had. Here we ascertained that the fugitives had gone on, taking the road to Tubbus, and had told the man at this place not to give us any supplies. As this showed a disposition on their part to be revenged, I thought it might be serious if they reached Tubbus before me, and told some lie to the Chief that would prejudice him against me. So I determined to be beforehand with him, and having written a letter to the Khan of Tubbus, informing him they had bolted, and that I wished him to make them prisoners directly on arrival, I mounted Rufeek, another of my servants, on my spare horse, and

told him to go on and reach Tubbus before they did. This, I heard afterwards, he succeeded in doing easily, as the fugitives had no idea I could follow them or could send a letter on.

Some few supplies were procurable at Safurria, and at the right season peaches and apples would gladden the heart of the weary travellers. The water is salt and putrid, but there is a very fine spring, called the Chasma-i-Shah, two miles back, where the water is excellent, being said to be the best between Yuzd and Tubbus; a repute which is quite just. The range we crossed in this day's march I think comes from the hills to the south, through which we have been meandering for the last ten days. This range I am beginning to be convinced is all one, and probably emanates from the hills about Naeen and Birjund. The watersheds of these hills are, as I have before had occasion to remark, in very many places almost imperceptible, the hills all appearing as if quite detached the one from the other; but I have examined them very carefully, and believe the reason to be that all the soil has been gradually washed off the hills, and has gone to form those long glacis slopes so characteristic of these hills, and tends by degrees to obliterate both the valleys between them and the lower connecting ridges. This process is apparent in all stages. One sees first the sufficiently rounded hills, covered with soil and bushes, running in a well-defined range, rising more or less abruptly from a level plain; secondly, the soil is being washed down, trees are disappearing, the summits are more craggy, the valleys less steep; and lastly, the hills are simply huge rocks, absolutely bare of soil, the valleys but long shelving plains. It is in the latter case that the connection between them is so difficult to trace; but

I think all the hills I have seen are connected by distinct ridges, though, of course, without actually going over all the ground it is impossible to fix the exact line; and, therefore, in my map I shall only connect those I have seen, leaving the others as separate ridges for others who have more time and opportunity than I have had to trace their course accurately.

Persia is evidently a tableland, of a general elevation of about 4,000 to 5,000 feet, with ranges of mountains running in all directions, never rising very high above the plain. I have now marched about 750 miles in this country, and ever since surmounting the Kotul Dukhtar have never been as low as 2,000 or higher than 8,800 feet, and (except one or two snow peaks seen a very long way, and regarding which it is consequently impossible to form any conjecture), no peak seems to run higher than 12,000 feet. More generally they are from about 9,000 to 10,000.

The deserts of Persia, therefore, though invariably lower than the surrounding country, are all considerably above the sea level—this part of the "Kuveer" being probably not less than 2,000 feet in elevation.

At this place, Safurria, I came across a camel sowar, who was going with despatches from Tubbus to Tehran, and so I took the opportunity to write a line to Capt. Napier to ask him to send me a few stores to meet me at Mushudd on my arrival. The man said he would do it in twelve days, and so I calculated the stores would possibly reach Mushudd at the same time as I should; but I was doomed to be disappointed, for to this day I I have never heard a word of them. They were sent off by Captain Napier, but who got them eventually I know not, though of course some righteous Mahomedan with an outward horror of wine, probably swallowed all the claret that was sent. There is no use crying

over spilt milk, but I must say I now regret I did not order some pork sausages with the wine for the benefit of the robber.

The next march, to Shorab, is fourteen miles. Here there is a tumbled down serai, and some salt water from a river bed; but two miles west is a Howz with sweet water. There is no difference in the usual desolate appearance of to-day's march, which has been through a valley with hills on both hands; those on the right, however, end about the tenth mile, while those on the left called Koo Dooroonoo, run on and appear to join with a range far off, called Koo-y-Nestary, thus verifying the existence but not the position of the range called Nestand's Koh in Walker's map. These hills run on to the east beyond reach of vision, and I shall be curious to see what becomes of them. A stream, generally dry, flows past Shorab out into a Kuveer to the east. At this place I met a "Kossid," or foot messenger, who was going into Yuzd: he said he meant to do it in four days; rather quick going at this hot time of the year. I entrusted him with a letter for the British Agent at Sheeraz, in which I told him of the mutiny and flight of the servants, and asked him to see that if they returned to Sheeraz they might be punished. Afterwards, when I met my friend Nuwab Hoosen Alee Khan in London, he told me that the cook Borzoo had turned up and been duly castigated.

From Shorab the road goes to Chardeh, making a considerable round in order to avoid a bit of Kuveer on the direct road between it and Tubbus; it lies over the same desert waste, the salt desert running close on the right all the way. Chardeh is a small village, completely hidden in date palms; it does not now contain more than fifty houses, having lost half of its inhabitants in

the famine. This village is mentioned by Christie in his route from Herat; he appears to have come round by Ispahan and Deh Mahamad, and to have avoided Tubbus altogether. A very good old gentleman, named Kerbela Hadjee, put me up in a nice little garden, with a stream of delicious clear water running past the door. He was, it appears, formerly very well off, having owned as many as fifty or sixty mules, which he hired out; but he lost nearly all these during the famine, when the animals seem to have suffered as severely as the people. He says he is now too old to try and get back his former wealth, and so he enjoys the *otium cum dignitate*—the former derived from the wrecks of his former fortune, the latter from the odour of sanctity which surrounds a man who has performed the double pilgrimage to Mecca and Kerbela. I here got a letter from the Khan, which was beyond my power to decipher, and as no one in the village was sufficiently learned to help me, I was reduced to the rather ridiculous necessity of telling the bearer to inform the Khan his letter had been received, that I was much pleased, and I would call on him immediately on my arrival. From this place I got in the evening a very good view of the run of the hills. The evening, by the way, is the clearest time in this country; the morning, when in India, at least, the atmosphere is always clearest, is here the worst time, as then there is a thick haze over all, which prevents any feature being made out distinctly. The Nestanji range runs right across the left front, but ends on a bearing from Chardeh of about 350°. There is then a small opening with no hills as far as the eye can see, or, indeed, as my guide informs me, till a place called Jaorut is reached. On a bearing of 20°, another range cuts the horizon, which runs right round the right to a bearing of 140°, shutting out all

view to the east. This range is clear and well defined, and some of its peaks—the "Koh Shootaree," for example—reach a height probably of not less than 10,000 feet; it is evidently difficult of passage, as all the roads from Tubbus to the east go round it either to the west or east.

Next morning, 24th May, I put on my uniform and marched into Tubbus, and about a mile out was met by an extremely beggarly show of indifferent horsemen, headed by a gentleman who looked as if he would have been more at home with a kalamdan* than a riding whip. This was the "istikbal," and with this following of tag-rag I started again from the Imamzada Yafir, and on reaching the walls of the city (which look very imposing in the distance, but in reality are made of a material of about the stability, and very like the appearance, of what we used to call parliament cakes at school) followed the road which turns to the left round the north-east corner, and, passing by the Duruya-y-Goolshan, again turns to the east up a nice cool street, with trees and water on either side, called the Khizabun—in fact, a boulevard. Suddenly we stopped at a mean-looking entrance, which I was about to pass, and I dismounted and entered. We went in by a low, narrow doorway, and then wound among dark, dirty, ill-smelling passages, which formed a regular labyrinth, till at last reaching another equally low door, which, as is usual with Persian doors, failed to agree with the spike of my helmet, we emerged into a garden, and at the far end of a tank found the Khan. This individual, whose name is Mirza Mahamad Baku Khan, and who rejoices in the title of Amad-ool-Moolk, is a man above the average height, and, I may add, the

* A kalamdan is a small wooden oriental case holding inkstand and pens, carried about the person by oriental scribes.

middle age; though, having dyed his beard a deep purple, it is difficult to guess his age at a distance. Then followed the usual tedious round of inane questions that an English schoolboy would be ashamed to ask, with interludes of tea, coffee, and the irritating hubble bubble of the kalioon. The Amad is evidently not a man of the world, and has none of the charming polish of manner which distinguished my friend Mahamad Hoosen of Yuzd. He is just what I should have expected in such a place. Cut off by his deserts from intercourse with the outer world, he is simply a barbarian, with manners scarcely improved by the dignity of his station. He informed me that he had placed an individual called Hadjee Reza Korlee, with ten ferashes and ten sowars at my disposal; that a place was ready for me in one of his gardens, and that I was to consider myself his guest. I thanked him warmly for his kindness, and immediately gave myself a wigging for forming unfavourable opinions regarding him. He then asked me the question which seems to come so regularly in every Persian interview: What had I come for? had my Queen sent me? I replied no, I did not enjoy the honour of any mission from Her Majesty; or, I would remark, I should have had a more fitting retinue with me. I was a simple soldier travelling for pleasure. This elicited the usual exclamation, half of assent, half of doubt. I then left, and went to the house I was to occupy. It was in a disgusting state, and I had to wait an hour before my servants could get it cleaned up. Then came my mihmandar, Hadjee Reza Korlee Beg, perhaps the most truculent-looking scoundrel I have ever seen, and who, in an impertinent manner, said, "The Amad has been pleased to send food for yourself and horses." The food for myself consisted of an unhealthy

leg of some animal, the genus of which looked so doubtful that I thought a neighbouring dog would appreciate it better than I should. Thus, my dear reader, began the hospitality of this desert-girt potentate, and you will be glad to hear that there was a kind angel watched over me, for here also it ended. The sowars and ferashes left me at the gate, and, praised be the Lord, no more nondescript legs came.

After breakfast—which I can assure the reader was not composed of any of the Amad's food, I have too great a regard for my health for that—I sent for the merchant to whom I had been recommended by Hadjee Mahamad Alee, of Yuzd, as I was running very low in coin. To my dismay, they came back and said there was no such person, and moreover my letter was on Herat. This was true enough. Through the stupidity of my Yuzd agents a letter on Herat had been given me, and the consequence was not a merchant would look at me. I offered them circular notes or orders on Tehran, Ispahan, and other towns in Persia; but they said they had no need of money anywhere. Now, being left without money anywhere is intensely disagreeable, but in an Eastern town, with such ignorant inhabitants as these Tubbusees, it is much worse. If a Persian thinks you have money he will do what you tell him, in the careless, indifferent way of which alone he seems capable; but if you have none, and he knows it, he meets you with an insolent look, and says, "Yes, but give me the money;" and now I was made to feel all the bitterness of this position. However, I thought I had still one resource in the Khan; he can always command money, and will, of course, not hesitate to advance any amount to an English officer. Being of this fond opinion, I sent Rafeek to tell him how I was situated, and to offer bills on Tehran or any

other place which would be convenient to him. The reply I got was, that though the Khan would gladly do anything for me, he had no money. I really could not believe this, but thought that he had misunderstood the exact nature of the case, and that it was not merely a convenience but an actual necessity to me to have money; and so, humiliating as it was, I had to send back my man, but only to receive the same reply. At last I wrote him a letter, saying I was loath to dishonour his name, but unless I could get some money I should be forced to sell some of my things—a fact which could not tell to his credit. After this, he sent me the sum of £2! I took it, but only to fling it back into the bearer's face, and indignantly said, "Tell the Khan I am not a beggar; I asked him for money on equal terms, not to be insulted. I shall now sell some things, and shall take care to let it be known what manner of man he is." However, when things are at their worst they generally mend, and it proved after all that Tubbus was not destitute of kindly natures; an old gentleman came forward and said that hearing I wanted money, he felt ashamed I could not get it here, and very sorry; and so between his shame and the warmth of his feelings he had determined to offer me what little he could scrape together, for he was a poor man. It was quite ludicrous to see him as he emitted this sympathetic address in short puffs, while he caught his breath between whiles. I was really touched at this, and said I should be very glad to take the money, but he must tell me where he wanted it paid back, and what I was to give him. "Mushudd," he replied; "if you pay it at Mushudd the Blessed, to a poor man named Hadjee Mehdee, who is this wretched one's cousin, and carries on a little humble trade." "Yes, and how much shall I give him on the

transaction?" "Well, I am a poor man; you take twenty tomams here; you are rich [very! thought I]; if you give twenty-five there on your arrival it will not inconvenience you." "Certainly not." And so we closed our bargain. Now, just calculate what this comes to: for twenty tomams, or £8, I was to pay £10 in twenty days; that is to say, 1 per cent. for every day, or 365 per cent. per annum! Poor, dear, sympathetic, kindly-hearted Hadjee Moola Hoosen! you, I suppose, soothe your conscience for transgressing the Prophet's injunctions against usury by the reflection, "in for a penny, in for a pound."

It is now time I should say something about this town of Tubbus, the chief of which Malcolm has surrounded with a halo of glory, made up of "valour and attachment of his tribe," "centuries of independence," etcetera. Tubbus is situated in a plain, and is surrounded in its immediate vicinity by a small circle of cultivation; but all round this, in every direction, is desolation. Thirty miles north-west of this is the Shorab range, and far away to the north the Nestunjee, while to the east is the Shootaree range, which shuts off all view in this direction; but the fantastic forms and peculiar colouring of which takes off from the otherwise dreary view all round. The town itself is enclosed by a high mud wall, built on a rampart formed of earth taken out of a ditch. It is about half a mile by a quarter of a mile, the length being from east to west. There are two gates at each end, and one street down the middle of the length. It has no bazaars, and the houses are all of a poor description. In the centre of the south face is the "arg" or citadel, a pretentious fortification of the same nature, reminding one of the Bala Hissar of Peshawur. Neither it, how-

ever, nor the town possesses importance as fortifications against any but an enemy ignorant of the simplest rudiments of the art of war, as it is so enclosed by trees and houses that not a shot could be fired from its great gaping loopholes; and its walls are made of so crumbling material that they would not stand three hours' battering. The most pleasant feature of Tubbus is the Khizabun, a broad boulevard, which runs out from the Darwaza Goolshan towards the hills, and which has a double avenue of trees down each side, with streams of water between them. It extends for about a mile in length, and on either side are the houses and gardens of the wealthier inhabitants.

Tubbus is not a place of any importance, and its cultivable land is so small that it could never furnish many supplies; indeed, I doubt if what it produces more than suffices for the current wants of the people. There are a large number of date palms scattered about in the gardens, and oranges, pomegranates, and peaches are grown here, while apples and grapes, &c., come from the village of Khoor; from the glen in which the latter is situated the water supply of Tubbus also originates. There are no manufactures whatever in Tubbus, and the place has very little trade, there being no merchants of any standing here. Some silk is produced, which is, however, sent to Yuzd to be worked up; tobacco also is abundant, and is exported. The elevation of Tubbus is about 2,000 feet, notwithstanding which it is a very hot place. In the daytime in May, when I was there, the thermometer rose to 103° in a house furnished with a badgeer, and certainly cooler than most houses in the place. At nights, too, it was not cool, though never actually hot. It is at this time that one reaps the benefit of the greater elevation

of Persia. In India the nights in some places are almost as hot, and certainly more trying than the days; but in Persia I have not as yet known anything approaching to a hot night. In fact, about two hours after the sun has gone down the nights are perfectly delicious—not cold enough for anything but the thinnest blanket, yet not nearly hot enough to require any sort of artificial cooling, as a punkah or thermantidote. If one had any of the appliances for cooling rooms one has in India, the heat would never inconvenience one; but as it is, it is sometimes, in such places as Tubbus, rather trying in a house, and the sun is extremely fierce out of doors.

The district of Tubbus-wa-Toon is very extensive, running as it does from Poosht-y-Budam on the south-west to Bejistoon on the north-east. It measures perhaps 250 miles by 100 miles, but of this a very small amount is cultivated, in fact, if the small spaces round Tubbus, Bashrooya, Toon, Bejistoon and Goonabad are excluded the whole may be termed a waste. From what can be seen in passing through the country, this district is already fully populated, and could not maintain a larger number, nor could it be reckoned on to furnish any large quantity of supplies. Every drop of water there is turned to account, and though it might be easy to improve the supply on the roads, that from springs could not be increased.

Whatever may have been the case in the time Malcolm wrote, there is no doubt Tubbus cannot now be termed in any way independent, nor is it in the least probable that the Khan would be heartily supported in rebellion. The people are a very quiet lot, generally have no arms, and certainly ninety-nine out of 100 must be utterly unskilled in their use. A very small force

would soon reduce Tubbus, and further, it is by no means unapproachable from the north, the direction from which an attack would most probably come.

I have now to detail a most unfortunate occurrence which happened here. Hoosen Alee, the old guide of whom I have above spoken, and to whom, from his intelligence and genial quaint manner, I had taken a great fancy, came to see me every day during my stay, and on the 23rd May he came as usual, and after a talk and giving me information, I may say of every road leading out of Tubbus, he left. However, being still in want of money, in the evening, I determined to see if a Persian official called Moosht Shak-oo-Dowlah had benefited more by his residence in Tehran than the Amad had by his occasional visits, that is, in his knowledge of the usages of civilized people in the matter of money transactions. I therefore wrote him a letter, enclosing orders on Tehran for £20, asking him to send me the equivalent here, and draw the amount in Tehran. For this it was necessary I should secure the services of an honest messenger, and the only reliable man I knew of in Tubbus was Hoosen Alee, for whom I accordingly sent. He arrived just after dark, and he at once agreed to undertake the trip with his usual cheerfulness, so I gave him the letter and he left my room. About an hour afterwards, or less, while commencing dinner, a man outside called to my butler, and presently he came back and said "This man say that 'ballad'* fellow, dead."

Dead! I exclaimed—how? where? They then both said "down below." On this I at once got up and went down stairs, and at the foot, immediately under the window of the upper story, was a body I recognized

* Guide.

to be that of Hoosen Alee, quite dead. He must have gone out of my room, and meant to go down stairs, to do which he should have turned sharp to the right, but, I imagine, seeing a door straight in front, he made for that, and must have pitched out straight on his head and broken his neck. He had apparently not moved after he fell, nor were any of his limbs in the least injured, or even his clothes disarranged, and so I can only conclude his head first came to the ground, and he must have been killed outright. This was a most unpleasant business, for setting aside my regret at the loss of the best guide I had met in Persia, there were circumstances, which I will explain hereafter, which rendered it necessary for me to proceed with the greatest caution. I therefore at once went to the principal authority in the place, Hadjee Mahommed Ibrahim, and told him. He seemed to take the matter very quietly and said, "Well, he has fallen, it was his fate, there's an end of him." I asked him to come with me at once and see. He said no, what is the good, he is dead. I will inquire in the morning. I pressed him again and again to come, and he always said the same, adding once "It is not usual to do this at night." I replied, "Of course you can do what you like, but in my country it is usual to make such inquiries at once." Seeing, however, he did not mean to come, I quitted him, and going home, I left a man on guard over the body, and went to bed. But no sleep came to me that night, which was about the most anxious I ever passed. The fact was, the two fugitives mentioned before, had arrived in Tubbus, and though the Amad-oo-Dowlah had told me he had imprisoned them both directly on arrival, I found afterwards this was a lie. He had in fact let them go about as much as they pleased, and had listened to a story they had concocted

against me, to which no doubt I owed much of the Khan's incivility and boorishness. I knew these two men were in Tubbus, and I felt sure they would be on the look out to make the most of anything they could distort to my detriment.

Here then was a story ready. A man had last been seen in my company, and an hour after was found dead. Fill up the details, my readers, as you please; think, with this groundwork, how easy it would be to concoct a story which would be believed by the ignorant scum of this place. I was in a strange country, speaking the language imperfectly, with no interpreter, no trusty friend within 400 miles—no one even to whom I could appeal; for had not the ears of all been poisoned against me? It therefore, as I have said, required the utmost caution. The first thing was to show no sign of what was passing in my mind, to betray no anxiety of manner, and to work all out without trusting any one. In this country, if a man is killed, his nearest male relation can demand the death of his murderer, and it at once occurred to me that Borzoo might go off to his people, and telling them a story, induce them to take such a course in this case, and in this was a great danger. I did not believe the Khan dared to lay a finger on me, but I knew how easily these people could be worked up into a frenzy, and how futile would be the Khan's half-hearted measures to protect me. I therefore first saw that every proper arrangement was made for the burial of poor Hoosen, and then paying the expenses, sent for his nearest male relation. He came, and I told him all the circumstances and expressed my deep regret at the death of his relative, before witnesses I could rely on; and when he thanked me, and said he was satisfied it was an accident, and

that Hoosen's fate had come, I began to breathe again. I then promised to do what I could for his widow and child, and we parted perfect friends. So far so good. I then at once made inquiries as to who had first seen the body, and took down the name of the man who brought me intelligence of how, and who were present when, I first saw it; next I made a careful plan of the house, and measured the exact spot where he lay from the wall; and lastly, I wrote all the above in a letter to H. B. M.'s Minister, and kept a copy by me.

This letter was as follows:—

TUBBUS, 24*th May*, 1875.

To H. B. M.'s MINISTER, TEHRAN.

SIR,—

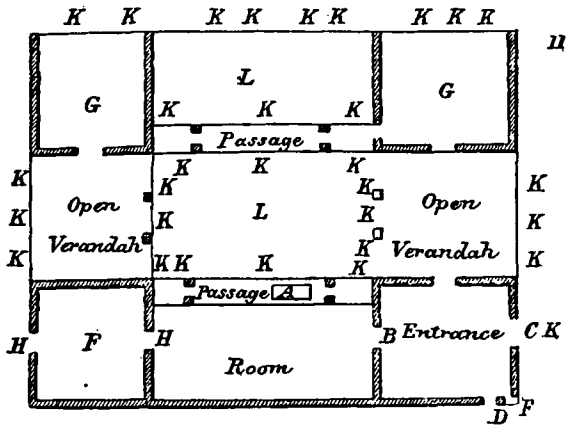
I think it right to give you the earliest intelligence of an unfortunate occurrence which happened here last night, viz., the death of a Persian, by name Hoosen Alee, who, it would seem, mistaking the way to the staircase, fell from the upper story of the garden house in which I have been living. Hoosen Alee was a guide, who had been with me since leaving the village of Khoor, in the subdivision of Beeabunnuck, on the 17th. He proved himself so useful and intelligent that, contrary to my usual custom, I kept him on with me as far as this place. Since my arrival here he has been every day to pay his respects and talk, and yesterday he came in the afternoon and went away again. In the evening, finding that all my efforts to obtain money wherewith to continue my journey, either from the Khan, or any of the merchants, were useless, I determined to send a letter to the Mushta Shah-i-Dowlah Hadjee Md. Zaman Khan, who is on duty in this district, and enclosing at the same time two circular notes

for £10 each on Tehran, I asked him to let me have the amount here. This letter I wrote, and wishing it should arrive quickly, sent for my muleteer, Mushudee Reza, and told him I should want a mule to go with it. He replied, he had no objection, as long as the man who went was one whom we could trust. I then said, "Would Hoosen Alee do?" He replied, "Yes, he would do very well, as we know him, and his home is here." I then ordered Mushudee Reza to go and fetch Hoosen Alee to see if he would go. He went, and presently he came back with Hoosen Alee. I did not note the exact hour at which they arrived, but it must have been after eight, as it was some time after I had had candles lit. Hoosen Alee came up to me and I told him, I wished him to go to Bashrooya to Md. Zaman Khan with a letter, and he agreed at once. After a short conversation about what road he had best go, I gave him an order for the mule and the letter, and he went. After he had gone I looked at my watch, and finding it was 8.45, I called for dinner. Just as it was being brought, however, a man of the Khan's came to see me, his name I don't know, but I believe he is called the "Daftan Nauriz," and after a few minutes' conversation left. My servant then brought dinner, and just as I was finishing soup, some one, Mushudee Reza I think, came outside and called my butler, and they talked for a few seconds, and then came in, and my butler said, "This man say the 'ballad' (H. A.) is dead." I said "Dead! how? where?" Then one or other said, "Down below." I at once got up and went down, and found two or three men standing round a body, which we recognized as Hoosen Alee's. He was lying directly below a window, close to the staircase, and as far as I could judge, was quite dead, having apparently fallen

on his head. I left a man there with a light, and at once sent off the gardener to tell the authorities, and shortly after I went myself, and told Hadjee Md. Ibrahim. He replied, "He would come in the morning and have him buried." I said, "Had you not better come now and see?" He replied, "No, what is the use of going at night." I then pressed him several times to come back with me and make inquiries at once, but he always replied it was unnecessary. The man had fallen by accident, it was his fate, what more could be done? Seeing that he would not come, I said, "Of course you can do as you please, but in my country it is usual to inquire into deaths like this at once." I then left, and on my return, ordered a man to put a light by the body, and see that no one touched it. This morning, at about 4.45, Hooke Beg came and said he had orders to take and bury the body; I inquired if he had orders from Hadjee Md. Ibrahim. He replied, "Yes; it is he who sent me." On this, I said, "Very good." They then tied up the body and took it away, and I sent a servant with it to see it buried and pay expenses. After they had gone a short time, Hadjee Md. Ibrahim came himself to see me, and I told him the above, and remarked, "It is a great misfortune, as he was a good man, and I liked him much." He shrugged his shoulders and said, "It was his fate." He asked me if it was dark when he fell; I replied, "Yes, it was very dark, there was no moon, and the sky was cloudy." He then went away; I paid ten krans for the expenses of Hoosen Alee's burial, and propose, as soon as I can get money, to send a present to his widow.* These are the whole circumstances of the case. Over page is a plan of the house I am living in, which will show how easy it is for a man to fall out

* I sent 100 krans (or about £4 8s.) afterwards from Mushudd.

of any of the windows, especially the one he did fall from.



A, Place where my bed was; B, entrance door to room; C, door from which he fell; D, staircase he should have gone down by; E, staircase to upper room; F, room occupied by me in day; G, room occupied by my servants; H, H, the only doorways that have doors or any railing; K, K, K, places which are quite unprotected by railing or door, and from which any one might fall; these are on the ground floor, all the rest above.

It is noteworthy that the spot where his head was is exactly 3′ 9″ from the wall, and as none of his other limbs were injured, or even his clothes disarranged, he must have walked out of door B and made for C without hesitating, and fallen forward first on his head.

The father of his wife came to see me to-day, bringing with him his little son. I expressed to him my deep regret at such a sad occurrence, and showed him all the above; he replied, "Yes, his fate had come, and he fell. When a man's time is come, the merest chance

brings him death." I told him I would send money for the widow, and took down his name, and he expressed himself quite satisfied, and thanked me, and said, "He would be sure to give the money to his daughter." I then requested him to convey to the widow the same assurances, and he left.

This is all that has happened to now—11 A.M., when I seal this letter; if anything more happens I will communicate it. This letter is enclosed in a black edged envelope, sealed in middle and at sides, seal lion's head, crowned with same motto as on the envelope round it. Please note this in case it is tampered with.

C. M. MACGREGOR.

It proved, in the sequel, that all these precautions were unnecessary; but I shall never regret having taken them, and I cannot too strongly recommend any one placed in such a position to do the same, especially if there is any reason to suspect treachery or hostility. Remember, that in these countries truth cannot be left to herself to work her own acquittal, and if others are likely to distort facts to your discredit, self-preservation requires you should build upon unanswerable arguments, based on actual indisputable facts.

I have spoken once or twice of my friends the muleteers, whom I euphoniously named Badrooe and Badkhooe, and I have now to record a fact which redounds very much to their credit, and shows I was not mistaken in my favourable opinion. Mr. Badrooe came to me to-day and said, after the usual Persian flourish, which the best of them do not seem able to do without, that he was my servant, that all my orders would be obeyed, by his eyes they would, nay rather, his head should answer for any short-comings. Moreover every-

thing he possessed was mine, himself, his nephews, his mules, their saddles, and finally, he concluded with an assertion, which, of course, must be absurdly untrue, that I was his father and his mother! Usually all this means, I want you to do something for *me*, but Badrooe was above that, and it meant on this occasion, I want to do something for *you;* that is, to make a long story short, he offered to sell one or more of his mules and raise the wherewithal to carry on with. Knowing that I would not let this be a loss to him, and that I had more mules than were required, I gladly agreed to this, and he went away to find a purchaser, which, however, he failed to secure, remarking when he came back, "I don't believe the pidr-sokhtas have got the price of a decent mule amongst them all."

CHAPTER VI.

TUBBUS TO BIRJUND.

At last I was to get away from this horrible place, and as it was a long march of thirty miles, I was anxious to set off early, but it seemed as if everything combined to keep me here. A tremendous storm of wind came on just as I was getting ready to start, and went on till near two in the morning, at which time I commenced my journey; the moon got up shortly after, and the storm had cooled the air, and the night breeze blew fresh and seemed to bring me back peace at last. The road went as straight as a die over the usual gravel waste, and I had not old Hoosen Alee to guide me unerringly with mark or without, and so the guide had managed to lose his way more than once. At nine miles the road enters low hills and goes up the bed of a river to a low easy pass, the Godar-y-Ashego, from which it descends easily, and going over undulations arrives at Daralit. Here there is a serai, and some supplies are procurable, and it is usually made the stage; but as I was anxious to push on, I went on to Deh Mahamad, the road to which runs through hills, crossing the range which runs to the east of Tubbus by an almost imperceptible watershed. At Deh Mahamad, the Khan's ladies had arrived in their brougham, having come by a road round by Chardeh which avoids all perceptible ascents. This carriage, which I went to see, is only an ordinary

brougham, not even strengthened in any way, so it is pretty good proof that artillery and carts could go anywhere over these roads. Indeed the whole of the country from Deh Bid is perfectly practicable for carts in every direction, the one difficulty being in the bits of heavy sand which intersect the country; the rest is, generally speaking, gravel, forming as good a roadway as could be desired. Deh Mahamad is a queer village, picturesquely situated with a background of fantastically rugged-hills. The houses are almost on a level with the ground and are as usual dome-roofed.

It has a certain importance as being a place where roads for Tubbus, Toorsheez, and Bashrooya meet. There is an old fort, and a new well-built serai, and about forty hovels which are built nearly flush with the ground with domed roofs. The water on the spot is brackish, but good water is procurable near. There are three or four hamlets round this place about two or three miles off.

Up to here, indeed to Aspak, I had no difficulty in tracing Christie's route from Herat to Yuzd, but whether through some carelessness in the copying, or his having forgotten the route, there are several errors which I have rectified. Starting, we will say, from Aspak he makes the stages Deh Mahamad fifteen miles, Chardeh twenty-four, which are right enough, but then he says, after eleven miles "come to Robat," then to Shootaran eighteen miles, then to Poosht-i-Budam, six (or twenty-four in all), thus making the distance only forty-five miles, whereas it is in reality—Shorab eighteen, Kelmers twenty-four, Robat-i-Khan fifteen, Poosht-i-Budam forty-five, total 102 miles. Again from Poosht-i-Budam to Illahabad he makes fourteen miles, whereas I make it twenty-four, and thence to

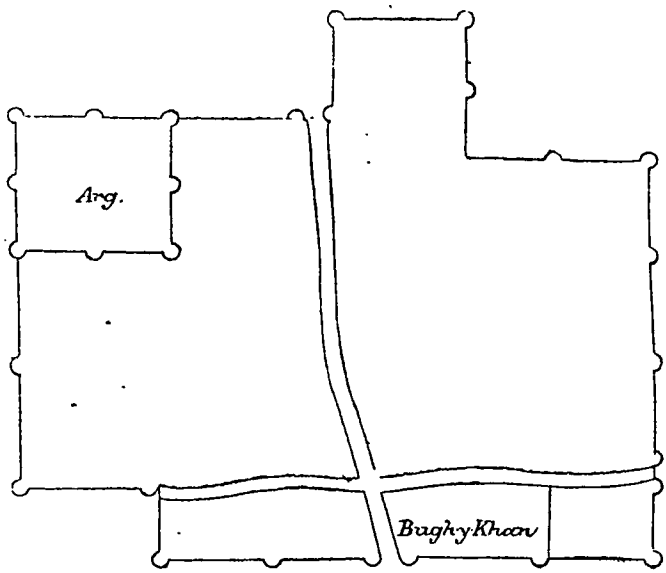
Sowgund only ten miles, although I make it fifteen miles. Thence to Rezab he makes ten, I thirteen and a half miles, and to Kharanuck twenty miles against my twenty-three miles. From Kharanuck he misses out one stage, Anjeeruck, altogether, and makes the distance twenty-seven miles, whereas it is two of over twenty each. Thus I make him to be eighty-eight miles out from Aspak to Yuzd, which, considering the whole distance is 278 miles, is a good deal. But in saying this, I am not actuated by the usual travellers mania for making every one out wrong but himself. Christie probably travelled mostly by night, very likely he was without instruments, and finally he was travelling in disguise and therefore could not ask many questions. Beyond Aspak I have as yet quite failed to trace his route, it must have gone near one of the following places, Bashrooya, Jan, Bejistun, or Gunabad; yet no mention is made of either, and none of the guides I have asked ever heard of the names in his route, viz. Nasareh; Kunshai, Chehlsar, Tajarad, Skar, Shahrwan. However, as I am going not very far from Khaf, I may have better luck at Gunabad.

There seems a perceptible difference in the climate on the east of the Tubbus range; the night of our leaving Deh Mahamad for Bashrooya was really quite cold, and I had to put on a blanket, a thing I had not dreamt of since leaving Taft. The guide I had managed to procure, was utterly ignorant of the country, though in Tubbus he had assured me that he had since his earliest childhood been on a never ceasing round and he knew every stone. However, by aid of a fellow traveller we got as far as Aspak all right, the road going through hills and over one or two low easy passes, from this I saw what I felt sure must be Bashrooya on a bearing of about 120°;

but the guide persisted it was not, pointing across the plain on a bearing of about 70° as the direction. As I did not trust him, I got hold of a villager and found I was right; and so off I started, followed by my boy, against the remonstrances of all the Persians of the party, who preferred to believe the guide rather than me. The road lay over an open plain, and though at starting I was not on it, I felt sure that by going in a slanting direction I must soon cross the road from Terej to Bashrooya; and so it proved, for after about four miles I came on to a fine broad track which took me straight into a howz one mile short of it. Meanwhile Mr. Badrooe & Co. had gone off with the guide, evidently expecting me to be very much sold, and so, great was their astonishment to find me sitting down in the shade, and to hear I had been there two hours. I am not surprised at the servants not having the least idea whether Bashrooya was N., SE., or W., for, as a rule they sleep the whole march, but the guide must simply have been an impostor. This shows that no reliance can be placed in descriptions of roads given by an ordinary Persian traveller, for directly he gets on his mule he puts down his head and goes off sound asleep. If throughout the march he sleeps the sleep of the blessed, it is put down as an easy march, but if his slumbers are interrupted with undue frequency, then it is a bad stage. In this case, finding himself perhaps slipping off the mule's tail, he wakes up and gives a grunt, saying "Koo," *i.e.* a hill, and goes off again if he can, if not, he meanders along on foot, only looking for an opportunity to get on again.

My stage to day is mentioned by Chesney as a town in an oasis in the great salt desert of Persia, said to contain 30,000 souls. No European is known to

have visited it. This was enough to give it a certain interest in my eyes, as, though I knew some Russians had been here, no Englishman had ever before visited it. In the first place, it is not in the great salt desert of Persia at all, nor anywhere near it; next, it has not now, and never could have had, anything like 30,000 inhabitants. Let me therefore substitute the following



ROUGH PLAN OF BASHROOYA.

for our hitherto incorrect information of this place. Bashrooya is simply a large village of some 800 houses, situated in the middle of a wide plain surrounded by a larger amount of cultivation than any place I have seen since Sheeraz, perhaps to a radius of three miles watered by a stream which comes down from the hills to the west. It is surrounded by a wall in the last

stage of dissolution, and covers a space of about 500 yards by 400, the long side facing the north. There are four gates, one in each face, and in the north-west angle is the "arg" or citadel, which though rather imposing if seen through a haze two miles off, has no importance whatever as a fortified position. Though it has a good deal of cultivation, it could not, I should say, export much of its good grain without running the risk of another bad year such as they had in 1871, when they tell me over 1,000 inhabitants died. The only thing that is made here is a woollen cloth called "burruck," which is manufactured from the hair of goats. It is a fine warm soft material and seems very cheap. There are two kinds, the finest being called Shumsheeruck and only costing 16 Rupees per piece of 18 yards, the coarser sorts called "burruck" costs about 6 Rupees per piece. I invested in a fine piece of a nice grey colour.

The water is good, and all supplies are procurable. There is no bazaar here and no merchants, for people who come for "burruck" pay ready-money. Very pretty embossed white earthenware is made at the village of Zeerik, about ten miles off. It is the chief place of a sub-division, which consists of Aspak, Aleeabad, Terej, Rokha, Arishk, Moordistan, Deh-y-Now, Khorumabad, &c. There appeared to be no armed men of any kind in the place, though it is said to have been formerly much exposed to raids from Baloches.

This is the first place on this road where the towers of refuge, with which I afterwards became so familiar on the Toorkmun frontier, are seen, and these are here scattered about in profusion in every field.

It is said that the raiders who used to attack this village were Baloches from Seestan. At first blush

this statement seems improbable; but, knowing what immense distances and over what awful country these marauders used formerly to travel, I can well believe it. They did not come often, nor did they usually meddle with armed people, though once, about fifty years ago, it is said, they attacked the village.

As being the chief place of a sub-division of Tubbus, it is dignified by the presence of a Naib, regarding whose personal appearance I am unable to detail any particulars, as, taking his cue from his boorish superior, the Khan of Tubbus, he never took the slightest notice of me till he got a hint from an unexpected friend who turned up. This was the Moosht-y-Shar or Dowla Hadjee Zaman Khan, who was in the district on duty. I wrote to him from Tubbus, saying I heard he was in the district, and I therefore appealed to him, as having come from more civilized parts, to help me in my difficulty and cash my notes on Tehran. He replied at once by sending me an order on Tubbus for the amount, saying he was very sorry he did not know of my difficulty before, and asking what he could do for me. I did not get his letter till I was near Bashrooya, when I sent a man into Tubbus for the money at once, and next morning I wrote him, thanking him heartily for his kindness; but it appears that my messenger had to go through a village where this gentlemanly Hadjee was staying, who, hearing he was going to Tubbus for the money, sent for him, and said he did not know I had left Tubbus, but now he would send his Ferash bashi* with the money at once, and told my man to go back. Presently this individual came, and was most polite, offering a thousand apologies because I had been put to such trouble, and saying he quite agreed with me, the

* Chief Ferash. Ferash is literally a carpet-spreader, an attendant.

people of Tubbus were regular "Khurs." * I thanked him, and regretted I should not have the opportunity of seeing the Hadjee, but hoped to meet him in Tehran, or, better still, in England, when I could show him that I was really grateful for helping me out of a very disagreeable business. The Ferash bashi, a singularly good-looking man, brought orders to the Naib to do anything he could for me, and the consequence was a deputation from that individual with a present of fruit, to say he wished to call on me. This was rather too much. The day before, when he might have helped me to a decent lodging, he put me into a hovel, and treated me with indifference; so now it was my turn, and I begged his man to inform the Naib that I knew he was only civil because he saw the Mo.osht-y-Shar treated me properly, and that, as he did not care to be decently civil the day before, he might keep his presents and his company for those who were likely to appreciate them better than I should. Thinking all this over, I feel convinced I was right. I always take particular care to show these petty chiefs all the civility I think is their due, but I am sure one ought not to let them be rude with impunity. The Naib's conduct is only another phase of the Persian character, and immediately after, an old gentleman, who had been doing some writing for me, afforded one more. He had written my letter to Khan Hadjee Zaman and had read me the answer. This was couched in extremely polite, considerate terms, and the old gentleman was much impressed with it; and whereas before he had merely regarded me as an infidel, whose habits it might be amusing to witness and whose things it was curious to see, now he saw how the Kafir might be made to secure an advantage for himself. So

* Fools.

he read the letter over again, repeating the passages which struck him as most polite over and over again to himself, and saying, "Excellent! the Hadjee is a gentleman, and knows how to address another. The pidr-sokhtas of Tubbus were ignorant, but this is the way." Then he lay by for a few minutes, after which he said in stage whisper to an individual who was guiltless of any remark about me, "Yes, what you say is right, he is a most pleasing man" (meaning me, Heaven forgive him!). "Very pleasant to speak to—full of intelligence—the possessor of the most wonderful things. Do you know, I did not imagine the Sahiban Alishan of Furrung* had such excellent dispositions" (the old ruffian probably called me the "Kafir," the "Mardoom Harami,"† the "Furrungee dog," beyond my hearing), and so on. I knew what was coming, and presently the Syud said, in the persuasive, dulcet tones you would address an infant, "Sahib, you are evidently a great man—you have, it is quite clear, boundless power over the Hadjee—don't you think you could do a little for me?" I said, "What is it?" "Why," he replied, "you know he is measuring the fields and water with reference to a new assessment, could you not point out that my fields are over-assessed already, and ask him to abate, not increase mine?" "You old ruffian," I said, "I never saw your fields in my life; and, besides, I would not on any account ask such a thing from him." The old gentleman tried in vain to induce me to change my mind, and went away grumbling. I am not aware that he called me euphonious names after this.

The next march (31st May) to Robat-Shu, is sixteen miles, almost entirely over an undulating waste of sand, with no single feature of the slightest interest. There

* Illustrious gentlemen of Europe. † Thief.

is, however, here an excellent serai of brick, with a fine airy and, wonderful to say, clean balakhana. The weather now, since crossing the Tubbus range, has quite changed, the days being delicious, such as they were a month or six weeks ago at Sheeraz, and the nights quite cold. They tell me that this is the case now the whole way to Mushudd; if so, perhaps the hottest part of my journey is over. This, however, seems too good to be true.

I am becoming rather puzzled as to the relative positions of Tubbus, Toon, Bashrooya, not visited by Englishmen; and Birjund, Ghaeen, and Khaf, of which the sites have been fixed more or less accurately; and as I shall not be able to clear this up satisfactorily until I have been to some of the latter, I have determined to go from Toon to Goonabad, crossing Bellew's road at Kullat, thence to Ghaeen, and then to Birjund, by which means I shall be able to get an accurate idea of the lay of the country. The map published in India is certainly very much out in these parts. I find that the Russians have had officers here before, although I believe it would be more diplomatic to call them "savants."

Several officers of Khanikoff's mission came from Herat and visited all the places in the Tubbus district, and took great care to note the number of houses, the produce, the number of camels, &c., all of which we know are of peculiar importance in a scientific point of view!

Between Robat-Shu and Toon is a dreary country, where a struggle seems to be going on between the sand and the rocky hills and ridges, the former trying—and succeeding fast—to cover the latter up. The country is in fact in the process of changing from a series of rocky ridges to one of undulating sandy wastes. Yesterday's

march showed the sand triumphant; to-day the rocks are still fighting on. This process of burying is most peculiar, and may be witnessed on a small scale in almost any village between this and Yuzd. You see the sand blown against the wall, gradually getting higher and higher, till it blows over and then forms a mound in the field beyond, which gradually increases its height till all trace of wall and field is lost, and you have before you a sand-heap. I can quite believe now, stories of towns being buried, having myself seen the thing on a small scale. No doubt all this sand comes from the deserts to the north-west, but I should like to know if these are decreasing in elevation to any appreciable extent, and if not, why not? The first appearance of Toon is certainly pleasing; a background consisting of a black high range which divides the drainage of Toon from that of Goonabad, with smaller brown parallel ridges; an expanse of yellow fields, with patches of dark green, interspersed with groves and trees, and in the centre the imposing walls and towers of the citadel and town. This first impression, too, is not effaced on a closer inspection; for Persia, Toon is decidedly a picturesquely situated town. It is surrounded by a wall (of irregular outline), which goes outside all the houses, and encloses besides a space—quite equal to that occupied by the houses—taken up with cultivation and gardens. Thus it is that Toon may be said to be a town four miles in circumference, though if only the space occupied by houses was calculated, it would dwindle to one-eighth of this. There are no buildings of any note in the place, but a few mosques and colleges are to be found, while most of the better houses, of which there is a total of about 1,500, have "badgeers." The colored tile dome of the Imamzada of Sooltan Ibrahim

is the one building which catches the eye, and this is a very inferior specimen of the art. The citadel certainly is very imposing in appearance a long way off, and when in good repair it must a have been a strong place. The walls are twenty feet high, raised on a rampart of mud thirty feet thick and forty feet high. It is an irregular polygon of seven sides, with very high towers at the angles, and surrounded by a ditch, which must have been thirty feet deep and fifty feet broad, but is now much less, being filled up and cultivated. There are three gates, viz., Tubbus, south-west; Ghaeen, south-east; and Mullick, north; and a clear space of about 400 yards more or less has been left all round. Altogether, this is much the strongest place I have seen in Persia, in fact it is the only place of any strength I *have* seen. It is, however, commanded, and two of its sides are enfiladed, and a third verse is taken in rear by a low ridge to the south-west, and even if in perfect repair could be of no use against a regular attack. But now it is one mass of shapeless ruins, which it would take at least as much time and money to clear up, and rebuild the fort, as it would to build a totally new one in another place.

The valley of Toon could no doubt furnish supplies for a considerable force for any length of time, as there is a very large expanse of cultivation, and the population is by no means great. Besides silk, of which large quantities are made, Toon produces very fine tobacco and a great deal of opium, nearly all of which is exported. It has no manufactures of any value, though the silk is worked up into inferior articles of attire. The Chief of Toon maintains no force, and the people are extremely quiet and peaceable, and though they have generally arms in their houses, none are ever seen outside. I have no hesitation in making all this invaluable information

public, as I find the Russian savants have been here before me, and so it must be all stale news to them.

The Naib of this place is a garrulous old gentleman called Abdul-Wahab. He called on me shortly after my arrival, but did not prove very interesting, though his efforts to smoke one of my cigarettes and nearly having a fit in the attempt were amusing. He was, however, civil enough. He tells me that last year a Russian Colonel was living in the same house as I am lodged in, and he went on to Seestan. He did not know what he had come for, and I did not care to press the question, as he might say, What are you come for? In fact he did ask me, and I gave my invariable answer: for pleasure. Yet I hope my readers will not think so poorly of me as to imagine I could care to travel through such an awful country as I have been in for a month simply for pleasure. Whatever the Russian Colonel may have come for, whether to evolve a theory from watching the dessication of the Seestan Swamp, to settle the interesting scientific question of the relative heights of the salt desert and the Loot, or what; the English Colonel has no hesitation in saying he came to see a country which Russian intrigue one day promises to make more interesting to Englishmen than they can be got to consider it now, and to give his Government such information as he is fortunate enough to pick up regarding the roads.

I went all round the walls of this town, and then on to the highest tower of the fort, with the idea of making a plan of it, but found it would be quite useless, as the walls can only be looked on as a protection from thieves, there being no communication or rampart all round, while all the ditches are cultivated.

I have made up my mind never to have anything

more to say to the priests of this country. It is no use being civil to them, as they take it all as a tribute to their superior worth; and they are so ignorant and bigoted that it is difficult to talk with them without finding yourself launched into a religious controversy. They are very fond of asking you whether you reckon Mahamad a prophet. If you say, "Oh, yes," or anything affirmative, in order to drop the subject, they say to your face, "You are a right-minded man," and behind your back they chuckle over making the Kafir forswear himself. If you say "No," then you annoy them, and they try to argue about Christ and Mahamad. In fact, while one cannot please them without sacrificing something of one's self-pride, it does not do to annoy them, as they are undoubtedly believed in by those who are more ignorant, if possible, than themselves.

I left Toon on the 2nd of June for Kullat, intending to go by Goonabad to Ghaeen, and then to Birjund. I selected this roundabout route for several reasons. The first was, the road was reported the best over the Toon range, and I was anxious to visit Goonabad, which has never, as far as I know, been visited by any European; and, finally, this route would lead me across the hills on the east border of Persia several times, and thus give me opportunities for inquiring as to the connection of the ranges of Persia with those of Afghanistan. I started at night, and went over level, or nearly level, ground to the hills about fifteen miles off, passing for three miles through the extensive gardens of Toon. These are made along both sides of the water-course which comes down from the Koh-Kullat and supplies Toon with water, and extend from six to nine miles, and consist of mulberries, apples, apricots, grapes, &c. &c.

They are a good deal higher than Toon, though the rise is scarcely perceptible. Passing by a large water-mill called Khoosh Kush, at thirteen miles, we entered the hills at fifteen miles, and ascended up a pretty defile for four miles to the top of the pass. The road is very easy, and I should say the Khan would have little difficulty in getting his brougham over, and the scenery is really pretty. A beautiful stream of clear water flows down the pass the whole way, and the bleak and rugged appearance of the hills is relieved at intervals by fields of wheat and small mulberry plantations. From the top, the view is the grandest I have yet seen in Persia. You look down on an apparently confused mass of black, brown, and chocolate-coloured wells of the most rugged nature and fantastic shapes, which are dotted with little patches of green. The hill is called Koh Kullat, from the hilltops assuming the shapes of forts. On the east side the gradient is equally easy, but the road is more difficult, on account of the rocks and stones it goes over and its crossing the bed of the river several times. On both sides there are many excellent defensive positions, and it would be a very difficult operation to force this pass in the face of opposition.

The pass is quite practicable for field artillery, and it would not be necessary to do more than widen it a little in places and clear away stones, to make it perfectly easy for any wheeled carriage. It is said to be the best of all the passes to Goonabad. The ascent takes two hours and the descent the same, and there is water, grazing, and fuel the whole way.

Kullat is situated on a level plateau on the left bank of the east stream from the Koh Kullat at its exit from the mountains. It presented one mass of green of mul-

berry trees and cornfields, and afforded great relief to one's eyes after the parched, bare hills we had come through. This place has an interest for me, as it was visited in 1872 by the members of the Seestan Mission, and so I am able for the first time since leaving Yuzd to connect my observations with those of other Europeans. It has about 100 houses and a considerable space of cultivation, every inch of ground being devoted to that purpose, and it produces wheat, opium, tobacco, a few grapes, besides apricots, apples, &c. There are a very large number of mulberry trees devoted to the produce of silk, and these give the place a most deliciously cool appearance, and are a great relief from the glare of the bare, rocky hill at the foot of which this place is situated. The inhabitants are Persians, and there are a few houses of a tribe they call Zanyin. There is a picturesque old fort here, perched in a commanding situation on an isolated hill overlooking the whole village, but being in ruins and unoccupied, and, moreover, being itself commanded at close range, and its water supply being easily stopped, it has no strength whatever. There are three fine cypresses here, the first I saw in Persia.

I had a long talk with the headman, who gave me a lot of information about the division. From the top of the serai Goonabad was distinctly visible across the plain, and I got a bearing to it. This, with the fact that I have received here all the information about it that I should be likely to get there, has determined me on turning to Ghaeen at once, and not visiting it. The subdivision consists of all the villages to the east of the Toon range, of which about half are situated near Kullat at the exits of various streams from the hills, and the rest round the village of Zoomin, which is the only one

of the eight forming the township of Goonabad given in our maps, and there is, for Persia, a great deal of cultivation in it.

From Kullat the plain of Goonabad, one of the subdivisions of Tubbus, is visible. I did not think it worth while to visit it, but the following is a list of the villages given me by the headman:—Joomin, Shuhr-Noghab, Dalooee, Belon, Goojd, Ghumburabad, Rahan, Reeab, and Bedukh. The other villages in the subdivision not on the Goonabad plain are Kakh, Dizfoon, Kullat, Zehbad, Sunu, Nowdeh Patengu, Halavi, Kameh, Bemurgh, Nowdeh Pishung, and Roshanawan, which are on the road to Khaf. This subdivision is said to be the richest of Tubbus, and produces large quantities of wheat, and could no doubt support a considerable force. Its situation, too, behind the Khaf range, is favourable for the assembly of troops for an advance by Khaf on Herat. The water supply is said to be good. All round the cultivation is a stony waste.

Each village has a patch of cultivation round it; the inhabitants cultivate all the ground round that is cultivable or there is water for, but outside these patches all is utter waste. To give one an idea of a district of Khorassan, at least of Tubbus, one would have to make a small green circle round each village on the map, and then colour all the rest a dead brown. This would show practically how very small a proportion of the country is cultivated, and how much is utterly barren and unculturable.

I have more than once heard Persians express great admiration for the Russians, and gratitude to them for liberating all the Persian slaves in Khiva. I quite agree with them, it was a great action worthy of a great nation, and I think Russia has earned by it a very considerable

access to her influence in Persia. I wish I could say the same with reference to our reception of the Shah, which I have also often talked to Persians about. I do not think this has produced at all a good impression; the Persians know that we are anxious about the Russians, and they look on it as a purely political matter, and while the enthusiastic reception their Shah met with in London adds much to his importance in their eyes, it has not in any way improved our position. The idea, I think, is, that we are very anxious for Persia to be on our side when the struggle with Russia comes, and that we will pay extravagantly for her assistance. This I cannot help regarding as a great pity. As far as I have seen, my impression at present is that the assistance of Persia would be far more of a hindrance than advantage to us, and that the policy of the English Government should be decidedly anti-Persian and pro-Turkish and Afghan.

This side of the Toon range seems to have been very much exposed before the capture of Khiva to raids from the Toorkmuns, who used to come over the Turbut range, and sweep the whole country. These, however, appear almost to have ceased, as the Toorkmuns have now no market for captives, and it is said that for this reason they now kill all they take. My servants are in a great funk of Toorkmuns; so much is that the case, that one quietly walked off from Toon, saying, I might go and be killed if I liked, but he was going back to Sheeraz, and would not go over the range to Goonabad at all.

The range which I call the Toon range, is a most important one in considering the physical geography of Persia. There is, I think, no doubt, that it is connected with a range which runs to the south of Tarshiz to the west; and which is itself a continuation

of the drainage system of Persia; it runs in a direction north-west to south-east, to the south of Bejistan, west of Goonabad and Ghaeen, and east of Toon, and has a considerable elevation. I shall be better able to trace its connection with the Afghan hills in a few days, but my impression now is that it is entitled to be regarded as one of the main ranges of Persia. The Toon range, from near the Kullat Pass throws off an important spur to the east, towards Khaf, after passing the longitude of which place it turns north, and runs between the two Turbuts, and has thence been termed the Turbut range, and then it crosses the road between Mushudd and Turbut Haidari. I will, however, at present confine my remarks to that portion of it which may be termed the Khaf range. My march to-day, took me first along the east foot of the Tun range to Kakh, a large and important village, with a great deal of cultivation, including opium and tobacco. There is here an Imamzada erected in honour of some relation of the Iman Reza, Sooltan Ibrahim, I see Forbes says, but it really does not matter. This is a finer building than usual, and its glazed tile roof is of a pretty pattern, and better preserved than any I have seen before. Kakh has a fort, which for these parts must be considered strong. It is situated on the spur which comes down and overlooks the whole village, and consists of an oblong enclosure, with high double walls and towers at the angles, and a centre keep. The fort, too, is not commanded, and altogether it may be regarded as pretty much beyond the means of an uncivilized power to take, and it might make a very pretty fight against any one. The village has a very large amount of cultivation, stretching for three miles up the left bank of the stream. The Seestan Mission halted at this place.

From Kakh the road goes up the ravine, and after crossing two or three spurs from the Toon range, comes to the Godar-i-Bonar, or Kakh, which is not difficult, but would have to be improved for artillery. From this place two roads lead, one in a direction 90° goes to Dasht-y-Piaz, the other in direction 140° to Manaway. I told the guide we ought to take the one to the left, but he persisted he was right, and so I gave in and came to Manaway instead of Dasht-y-Piaz, which should have been my stage. From the pass the road leads down a pretty valley with a watercourse running through the centre the whole way in. On the road we passed some camps of gipsies, who were rather fierce-looking customers, and came up in such a threatening manner at first, that I took the rifle from my servant by way of warning. However, after a bit, they crowded round us, and the women of the party did not show any of the usual Mahamadan reserve, but displayed not only their faces, but other charms, which society in civilized countries have, till lately, as a rule agreed had better be covered.

On arrival here, I formed as usual the centre of an admiring crowd. This is a great nuisance, as one cannot be sure of a moment's privacy. However, I must say that these people behave much better than an English crowd would do; they generally sit a short distance off, the men on one side, and the women on the other, and though doubtless they discuss one freely, one does not hear their remarks often, nor do they annoy one with the rude laughter or jokes which one would have to undergo in England. I find that it is very difficult to get rid of the men, they regard me as a "tamasha,"* and don't see why they should not have their fill of

* A Hindustani word, meaning a show.

it. With the women it is different, for I have only to take up my binocular, and direct it towards them, for them all to disappear with a shout of merriment. I think one of the most remarkable things about these Persian villages is the perfect peace and quietness which seem to reign. Often I go right into the middle of a village without either seeing or hearing a soul, and one never hears the constant wrangling or petty abuse which is so invariably the accompaniment of an Indian village.

I must say I am getting rather curious to see some of their women. I am not anxious for a flirtation with any of them, but it is tantalising to go for months without seeing a woman's face. However, I suppose I shall not succeed. They ought to be good-looking, judging from the men, and the young girls one sees. What a horrid custom this veiling is! and originating from such a coarse idea, I cannot conceive a people coming to any good who maintain such a custom, as women can have no good influence over them as long as they regard them in the light they do. There can be no chivalrous feeling towards women while this state of affairs continues; and without chivalry to women, men are but sorry creatures.

The village at which I am stopping to-day is situated in a quiet secluded valley, through which a stream of deliciously cool clear water flows, irrigating the large amount of cultivation belonging to the place. There are also numerous trees, and altogether it forms a perfect picture of rural beauty, plenty, and quiet.

I managed to pick up four matchlock-men to-day, but I must say I regard such escort as quite useless, for I am sure they would bolt the first thing themselves; and except that taking them is like pre-engaging their services, which might otherwise be employed in plunder-

ing one's baggage, I can see very little use in them. Really, these Persians are the worst hands at finding their way I ever saw. My road to-day went over about as easy a country to find your way in as any I ever saw; nevertheless, I was led wrong three times, each time putting my guides right with my compass. They also never will admit they are wrong, but go on protesting so strongly that they know the road, that one is almost forced to believe them. We passed over the usual bare plains to day; but there is a total change in one thing—the soil is everywhere cultivable if there was only water. Dehishk, picturesquely situated among mountains, formed a pleasing episode in this march.

This place is built in two portions, which are both situated in a small valley surrounded by picturesque hills, and are connected by cultivation. There are a number of fine poplar trees here, as also many mulberry, the verdant foliage of which gives the place a very pretty appearance. There are two or three superior houses here, belonging to the officials of the subdivision, but all the rest are of the usual domed shape. The village has a great deal of cultivation, which covers the whole space between the hills—about one mile, and extends for about four miles.

The march, however, was fittingly ended by the village of Noghab, where I was obliged to halt (5th of June). There is no way of describing it, except by saying it is a detestable place—no trees, bad water, little cultivation, and impertinent inhabitants. The road to-day lay through an extensive valley, running north and south, about fifteen miles across by thirty long, which is bounded on every side by hills. Those on the east are formed by a spur of the range which is thrown out from the main range of Toon towards Khaf; those on the

west by the main range itself, and then by a spur from it. The valley drains to the south, and consists everywhere of cultivable soil; but as water is very scarce, only a small portion of its surface is cultivated. The principal villages—Dasht-y-Piaz, Manaway, Dehishk—have plenty of water, but they must use it all up, as none seems to escape into the plain. These villages, situated immediately under the hills to the north, are very pleasant places, but those in the centre of the valley are dreary in the extreme. All the drainage of this valley goes eventually to the east. It is separated from Ghaeen by a spur of the main range, which I am to go round to-morrow. This spur is crossed by a road which goes from Dehishk, by the Godar-y-God pass, and is the route taken by the Seestan Mission, and should have been mine also, but Persian guides are very ignorant and moreover very unscrupulous. They know, considering their calling, very little about the country, and if they have an acquaintance in a certain village they wish to see, they have no hesitation in swearing that your road goes round by that village.

The road from Noghab to Lehdeh crosses the Gorod ridge lower down than the Godar-y-Gorod by a low pass, the ascent to which is scarcely perceptible; it then winds among water-courses draining to the east and south the whole way, crossing a low ridge just before reaching Ghaeen. As no one in this place knew I was coming, it being a rule with me not to talk much about my route, there was no one to receive me, and I suddenly appeared round a corner and dropped into the middle of a group of peasants having a gossip at the gate before going to their work. They were much astonished, seeming half inclined to run away; and no wonder. Imagine a Persian with a tall black sheep-

skin hat, light-blue coat, &c., suddenly turning a corner of an English lane and appearing in the middle of a group of the noble peasantry of England! The remarks would be similar to, only probably less complimentary than, those of Persian villagers under the same circumstances. "Oo be he, Bill?" Giles would remark, "Don know; maybe the mon from the sarkuss." The Persian equivalent passed remarks on my personal appearance, during the course of which I gathered that my hair was red, and that consequently I must be in possession of a good dye of that colour. My Terai hat, by André, was not approved of; it was said to be clumsy in appearance, and probably heavy. It was remarked that I had very funny "sakh-peech's" on; and it was not understood what the bits of iron coming out of my heels were for, and so on. These remarks were not made to me, or at me, but among themselves; and they were perfectly respectful, calling me Agha in speaking to me. After a little delay I got a place to put up in, and the Khet Khoda came to see me, the Naib being absent. He was a sickly-looking man, suffering, I think, from asthma; and thinking, from my appearing to know what his disease was that I must also know his cure, he became very importunate for a remedy. Poor devil! I wish I could have given him one. After him came a gentleman of the place named Ghulam Alee, a good-looking man, with hair dyed a beautiful auburn colour. His manners were a good deal more like those of an Afghan than a Persian, and the rapidity with which he rattled out falsehoods was astonishing. He was, however, a very decent sort of fellow, and took me all round the city, and to see the gardens. I can't say I care for the generality of Persian gardens; they are not pretty in any sort of way, and no attempt is made to keep

them in order. I should like to see the face of a Scotch gardener on being shown one. "D'ye ca' this a gairden? it's mair like a weelderness, I'm thinking," he would say with contempt.

I had an idea from my reading that there was a large fort at this place, but I find that the one alluded to by Ferrier is now a mere mass of brick mounds, so that it is difficult to make out what has been the trace of it. It seems, however, to have been a square of about 400 yards, erected on a mound about fifteen feet high, with bastions at the corners and towers in the centre of the curtains; there has certainly been some sort of central keep, and I should think, on the whole, it may have been a strong place once; but an elderly man informed me that, as far as he could remember, about forty to fifty years back, it had always been unoccupied.

The town of Ghaeen itself is a miserable place, consisting of at most 800 dome-roofed hovels, without a single building of any architectural pretensions. The size of the Masjid-y-Joom indeed forces it on one's notice, but it is very ugly. It is of a different plan to any I have seen elsewhere, consisting of a huge façade of burnt brick, whitewashed and painted with a red design, without any minarets, and a large barrack-like building with three domed roofs behind. The situation of Ghaeen, in the south of a valley about ten miles by six, is rather below that of Sheeraz, and the numerous gardens with which it is surrounded give it somewhat of a picturesque appearance from a distance. These gardens, here, as all others which I have seen in Persia, take up a very appreciable proportion of the cultivable space round; and, considering that this is always very small, I think it seems doubtful policy to devote so much of the soil to the cultivation of what is, after all,

only a luxury. The population of this place seem generally very poor, and to be worse off in respect to the "coat which makes the man" than elsewhere, and they also appear very idle, there being no signs of any one having anything to do. This may be accounted for to a certain extent by the fact that 300 houses are occupied by those useless, unprofitable drones termed Syuds.* The place has no manufactures, except of carpets of an inferior quality to those of Birjund; but there is a description of silk embroidery made by the women, which, if not very pretty, is unique, not being made elsewhere, and now of a certain value, as the art is said to be dying out. I was therefore glad to secure a couple of pieces, which will make rather pretty cushion covers for Viva. The staple production of Ghaeen is saffron, which is exported in large quantities to Khubbees, from which it eventually goes to Bundur Abbass.

The situation of Ghaeen gives it some importance; being equi-distant from Khaf and Birjund, it has command over the routes leading to those places from Herat, and there are also direct routes from it to Herat, Sabzwar, and Farah. It would likewise be able to furnish supplies for a small force, and it could draw in more from the fertile districts of Toon and Goonabad to its rear. The only aid that could be expected from it in the way of transport would be donkeys, but these are very numerous, and, as I have remarked before, by no means to be despised as beasts of burden. It would therefore seem to be an excellent site for a fortress, to protect the east frontier of Persia, or to form a *point d'appui* from which to advance against Afghanistan. The women of Ghaeen are not so closely veiled as their

* Descendants of Mahomed's daughter Fatima and her husband Ali.

sisters more to the west, and from this circumstance I am enabled to inform my readers that in this place, at least, the women have noses, a matter regarding which I was before in doubt. The road from this to Birjund has been before described by Bellew, so I will not say much about it. On the 7th of June I marched to Lehdeh, which was my first stage. It consists practically of an ascent to the Godar-i-Khooneekh and a descent therefrom over undulating country, the hills being everywhere easy and the roads quite practicable for artillery. I made this march at night, and the relief from my usual experience of glaring heat was very pleasant; though, of course, I cannot do this always, as in routes not before followed by Europeans, I have, in the interests of geographical knowledge and of Government, to march by day, and grin and bear the sun of Khorassan, which is pretty warm. As I was going out, I was amused by an instance of the faith of these people in a Furrungee to do anything. A tall dirty individual spurred, or rather kicked, his noble steed, a donkey, up to me, and said he wanted me to do something for him. His name was Mahamad, he said, and he resided at Ingul, a village near Ghaeen; three years ago his brother was carried off by the Toorkmuns, and was now at Mowr,* and he wished me to procure his release. I tried to make him see that I was utterly unable to do this, but he persisted I could if I liked, and so, to pacify him, I said if I had an opportunity I would remember.

The village of Lehdeh is situated in an extensive plain, and looks in the distance like a collection of beehives. It is a miserable place, but has a good deal of wheat cultivation. It is formed of the inhabitants of three villages, who agreed, some years ago, to live

* Another name for Merv.

together in peace; but as two of the three have a tree each, while the third, for some reason, has not been able to raise one, this fact has caused an unfortunate soreness towards the more fortunate neighbours, which may end in a rupture of their hitherto happy relations. There is a dilapidated fort here of some strength. It consists of an *enceinte*, one hundred yards by sixty, with walls forty feet high, five feet thick at top, and thirty feet at bottom, raised on the top of a mound fifteen feet high, and it is not commanded. It could therefore, no doubt, if put in repair, offer a determined resistance to any attack, especially, as owing to the gate being well protected by a traverse, it would be very difficult to blow it in. The gateway is only five feet high, and is closed in a unique manner by a huge round stone, five feet in diameter, and 2 feet thick, which can be rolled in front of the opening. At Lehdeh the Naib of Ghaeen, who had been absent from that place when I was there, rode over from a neighbouring village to see me. He talked about the Seestan Mission, and especially remembered Dr. Bellew, who seems here, as at other places where I have crossed their route, to have made a great impression. This, no doubt, he was enabled to do by his complete knowledge of Persian, his attainments as a medical man, and "last, but not least," his open, urbane manner and his knowledge of Asiatics; the consequence is that here, not less than in the Peshawur Valley—where his name is a household word—he has attained for the English name an influence which cannot fail to have a good effect.

Lehdeh is one of the principal places of manufacture of the celebrated Khorassan carpets, sharing its reputation in this respect with the village of Dorokhsh, in the Zeerkoh subdivision of Birjund. These are of

very beautiful workmanship; the patterns, though sometimes in outrageously bad taste, are often, I may say generally, very pretty, the colours being blended in a very tasteful manner. I wished much to have bought a very beautiful one, which was brought to me at Lehdeh; but the price, twenty tomams, though cheap enough in all conscience, was beyond my means at the time.

From Lehdeh the road ascends again to cross the main range here called Samun Shahee, and then descends down a valley to Birjund. So far I am enabled to trace this range as continuous from N. of Kullat, running with a direction SE., and separating the drainage of Toon from that of Ghaeen. It is crossed by numerous passes, from W. to E., and in its course S. of Ghaeen by the Khooneek Pass, from which it runs off SE. apparently towards Koh Jeesuck, when it turns W. and then NW., and again crosses the Birjund road at the pass variously named Godar Samun Shahee, or Ghibk, or Reezukk. This range is one of the objects of my taking this route to trace, and, as far as I can judge at present, I shall, in going to Herat, have to cross it several times, and, therefore, hope to be able ere long to settle the question, hitherto an open one, whether the mountain system of Afghanistan has any connection with that of Persia.

From Lehdeh I had sent on a letter, couched in the most flowing language the scribe I employed was capable of, to the Amir of Ghaeen, informing him of my wish to make the acquaintance of a chief so world-renowned (Heaven forgive me!) as himself, and asking him to appoint a place for my residence. I was, therefore, much disgusted on my arrival to find no preparation made for my reception; and on sending up to the

"Arg" to ask for a place, my man was told to go to the serai. This seemed to me such rudeness that I determined not to put up with it, and so, selecting as uninviting a spot as I could outside the town, I had my tent pitched.

In the evening, about four, an individual came to say the Amir had got a house ready for me in the city; but I told him to inform the Amir, with my compliments, that I had asked once for a place to stay in, and as he had not chosen to give me one, I had been forced to go outside the town, and now, as I was settled, I could not move. This message produced the effect I thought it would, and was presently followed by the arrival of an imposing individual, the confidential agent of the Amir, who came to beg me to go to the house appointed. I, however, held out. I said I did not know their customs. Believing that the Amir would be displeased if I did not inform him of my arrival, I had taken care to send on a letter asking for a residence, but on reaching the town not even a donkey had come out to receive me, and I had been told to go to the serai. If these were the customs of Ghaeen, all I could say was, they were different from every other place in Persia, where I had been treated, at least with civility, and, therefore, I was very sorry I had come, and would relieve the Amir of my presence next morning. Now, the fact was, I really did not care for a residence, which, if a little cooler, would not be half as clean as my tent; but I considered it would not do to let myself, as an English officer, be treated cavalierly. The Mirza immediately broke out into a thousand apologies, from which I gathered that he said it was all a mistake. The Amir had not got my letter in time, and he begged me, in the most fluent lan-

guage, not to dishonour the Amir's head by letting it be said that he permitted one of the "august gentlemen of Europe" to remain out in the maidan* like this. This was all I required, an acknowledgment that my reception had not been proper. As to the reason given, it might or might not be true, and did not matter the least; so I said that, as there had been a mistake, and my only wish had been to be civil to the Amir, I had no desire to make more of the unfortunate occurrence, and so would take my "tashreef"† to the house appointed.

Accordingly I went, accompanied by the Mirza and the usual farashes, &c., and later the Amir sent me a present of some sugar, tea, and lime juice, all of which were most acceptable, and much more suitable to my wants than the usual sickly sweetmeats and sodden fruit one generally receives, the lime juice especially, as I was beginning to feel the want of vegetables in my usual diet. So this little political drama ended, and I enjoyed for that night the sleep which I had earned by three nights out of bed.

* Plain. † Honour, nobility, excellence.

CHAPTER VII.

BIRJUND TO PAHRE.

In the afternoon of the day after I arrived, the 9th of June, I paid a visit to the Amir, who lives in a garden-house about three miles across the plain. On arrival I found the house to be a very plain structure, situated in the middle of a garden of no particular beauty, and I was received in the usual room. This is generally situated in the centre of the building, on the ground-floor, and looks down the north avenue of the garden, in most cases on to a basin of water. On this occasion it was carpeted, as usual, with a carpet in the middle, two long strips of felt down the sides, and a smaller, but superior, carpet in the place of honour, where were placed two chairs, always produced, if the potentate you are visiting is the happy possessor of any.

Meer Alam Khan, whom I was now visiting, is of middle height, stoutly built, with broad shoulders, and with the appearance of great physical strength. He must be over fifty, judging from the age of his son and the length of time he has been before the world; yet he either wears very well, or the "Figaro" of the Ghaeenian Court must be more than usually skilful with his dyes, as he might easily pass for thirty. He has a very open determined expression of countenance, but this is combined with an exceedingly quiet, gentlemanly man-

ner. His reception of me was better than I had expected, and we got on very well indeed. I stayed a long time talking about affairs in general, jumping from things European, for his edification, to things Khorassani for mine. He is much trusted and respected by the Persian Government, and has done them very good service in his day. When the Hissam-oos-Sultanut took Herat, in 1857, he was in command of a detached force which operated simultaneously from Ghaeen and Birjund against Subzwar and Lash Jorven, and he has since carried out the Persian policy in Seestan with such great ability that he is now entrusted with the portion of that Afghan province which the diplomacy of the Persian Foreign Office secured for the Shah. His title is Hashmat-oo-Dowlah, and he rules with great success and tact over the whole of the SE. corner of Khorassan, extending from a few miles S. of Khaf to the Seestan desert, and from the crest of the Toon range to the Afghan border. That is to say, his country has a length of about 300 miles by 150, the southern part, however, sloping off from the 200th mile to the extreme S. point of Seestan. The revenue paid to the Shah is said to amount to 23,000 tomams. The country of Ghaeen is entirely mountainous, and consists of the eastern, western, and southern drainage of the Ghaeen range of Khorassan, yet there are some very extensive plains or valleys. The whole country may be termed a waste of rocky desolate hills and stony waterless plains, relieved at far intervals by small—very small, compared to the whole extent—patches of cultivation. The staple production is wheat, but there is also a considerable quantity of opium, saffron, and silk. The only manufacture is that of carpets, in which, however, some considerable degree

of excellence has been attained, the carpets of Birjund always commanding a high price in the market. Meer Alum's country, though situated on the most lawless border of Persia, and though formerly perpetually swept by raids of Toorkmuns, Afghans, and Baloches, is now, owing to his strong firm rule, as safe, except, perhaps, in the Zeerkoh subdivision, as any part of Persia. He maintains for this purpose and to garrison Seestan a force of 11 guns, 1,000 cavalry, and 2,000 infantry. There is no doubt that Meer Alum will play a leading part in any complications which may arise in this direction, but whether he will throw himself heartily into one side or the other time alone can show.

After my visit to the Amir, I went to see his second son and heir, Ishmail Khan. He lives in a high house in the "Arg," and I had to climb several flights of stairs, through odours that seemed out of place in a gentleman's house; but in this respect, as in most others, Asiatics are different from ourselves, and the causes of stenches which would drive a whole parish into the papers in England are here the rule. After seeing Meer Alum, it is impossible to be much impressed with his son, who is a heavy, dull, but well-featured man, of about twenty-eight, I should say. His conversation did not belie his appearance, and consisted chiefly of a succession of questions on my part, which I fired off in the hope that I should at last "strike ile;" but it was no good, and so I was glad to bring the visit to a close.

Looked at from the north, which was the first view I got of it, Birjund seemed to be about the most desolate dreary place, except, perhaps, Sakhi Sarwar, I had seen. From this point nothing is to be seen but desolate brown hills and a mass of mud hovels built on the

spur of a hill. If, however, the town is seen from the south, the picturesqueness is much increased, for here there is a bright patch of green trees and yellow fields to relieve the eye.

It is situated principally on the left bank of the Birjund river, which comes down from Boojd, and completely covers a low ridge which runs parallel to it. The part on the left bank is enclosed by a low wall with numerous gates and doors. A considerable number of buildings have also sprung up on the right bank, so that the whole town must occupy a space of not under one mile by half a mile. The houses are all domed and are generally of a poor description, built of sun-dried brick. The streets are very narrow, and exceedingly tortuous, winding right and left and going up and down the hill without any apparent reason, and as they often go under low dark arches, riding through them is not always easy. The number of houses in the place is about 3,000. There is no covered bazaar here, but several streets of pretty good shops. The "Arg," or citadel, is situated at the foot of the hill to the east, and is a huge square enclosure with the usual bastions and towers. It has no importance as a fortification, as it is in a dilapidated state, and is commanded from several excellent sites for batteries to the NW., N., and NE. It is closely surrounded by buildings, and its water supply could be cut off. The Arg is the residence of the Naib of Birjund, and contains a small detachment of Sarbaz,* six nine-pounder, and one eighteen-pounder guns. To the west of the town at the end of the spur is situated the Kulla Paeen, which is a much more respectable work. It is a square of about 100 yards, with walls forty feet high, built on

* A Persian foot soldier.

the river-bank, which is scarped to the north and the approach to it all round is difficult and steep. If put into good repair no doubt this place might offer a respectable resistance, but at present there is cover close up to it, and the walls and loopholes are in such a state that the former could not be manned, and about 1,500 yards to the east on a hill above the village is an excellent site for a battery which would command the fort. The water supply is not abundant and is precarious, being dependent on good rains. It is brought in Karez* from the hills to the south. The most common tree at this place is the "anab"† from which some medicine is made. The residence of the Amir is situated three miles across the plain to the SE., and is not a building of any size or architectural beauty, but being situated in the midst of luxuriant foliage, is a more pleasant residence than can be found in the town itself.

Birjund has considerable traffic with Kirman, Yuzd, Herat, Seestan and intermediate places, and merchants from several towns are to be found here. The only things of any value made in the town are the carpets; and I went round to see these, going into a dozen shops or more. They were nearly all of very soft smooth texture, and the colours were always brilliant and good; but it seemed to me there was immense room for improvement in the patterns, which were, with a few exceptions, glaring and in bad taste, consisting of impossible flowers unartistically twisted, on a ground of gaudy colour. There were, however, a few that were really pretty. I tried to make a deal for a small one

* Karez is a subterranean canal for irrigation, or a ditch round a field to convey water.

† Anab means literally musk.

about twelve feet by six feet, but could not get the man to come lower than twelve pounds. As a rule these carpets are made in shapes that unfit them for European rooms. It is not therefore worth while to buy more than a small one as a curiosity and pattern.

There are some very fair gunsmiths and ironsmiths here. The valley of Birjund, though composed of good soil, has very little cultivation, and this only in a few places immediately under the hills, all the rest being a gravel waste. Birjund could not of itself furnish any supplies to an army, but a few camels, a large number of donkeys, and some horses might be procured. It is the chief place of a district of Khorassan which contains the subdivisions of Neemboluk, Ghaeen, Birjund, Khoor, Nehbundan, Zeerkoh, Soonikhana and Seestan. The site is an important one, as roads lead from it to Herat, Subzwar, Anardara, Farah, Lash and Seestan, and it could be supported from Yuzd by Tubbus, from Kirman and from the north by Toon, to all of which there are roads. The climate of Birjund is very mild and equable, being neither very warm in summer nor cold in winter.

Going through the streets of Birjund one day, I came on a batch of Toorkmun prisoners coupled by very heavy chains round their arms, necks, and ankles. These had been captured a few months before, in the Zeerkoh subdivision, by some of the Amir's sowars, and were being kept till ransomed. I was rather surprised at this, as I should have thought the doings of these people towards the Persians had long ago placed them beyond the pale of mercy. But this was not the case, and more, the people in the streets seemed to show them no animosity; they were talking to them on apparently quite friendly terms, and when I

said I thought such people should be killed with as little compunction as you would kill a wolf, or any other wild animal, they only laughed and said, no doubt! One man, however, took a more practical view of it and said, "No, I would not kill them, a dead Toorkmun is only a lump of flesh, which you have to bury; a live Toorkmun fetches 200 to 300 krans* as ransom." This no doubt is true, and as long as the Persians are not strong enough to protect their own subjects, this is the best plan, but if it were otherwise, sternness in the disposal of these kidnappers would in the long run be the most humane course.

I was much struck on my arrival in Persia, with the coat worn by all classes, and called "Alkhalik." It is something between a frock coat and a dressing gown, with, I think, the good qualities of both, that is to say, it looks well on any one, as it sits well into the figure, and is more comfortable than the frock coat, as it can be adjusted equally well either for appearance or ease.

Although called an "alkhalik," it is quite a different coat to the Indian alkhalik, in which Irregular Cavalry officers used to disport themselves in the old days. The Persian coat seems to me a most suitable dress for a soldier, and made up in blue cloth it would look very well indeed, besides being a dress a man could work in, which is more than can be said for any coat the British army is at present blessed with.

All the women in Persia wear trousers, but these are so loosely made that the cloths of the two legs do not separate, as in men's trousers, when any movement is made. So much so, in fact, is this the case, that it is difficult to see that they have not got petticoats on, and it was a long time before I discovered that the

* £8 16s. to £13 8s.

fair sex in Persia had adopted the more masculine attire. It seems to me that this garb would solve the question of the proper dress for women. These trousers look like petticoats, yet have all the freedom and warmth of trousers, without, let me add, subjecting the wearer to the chance of those exposures which are not unfrequent in windy days at home. The coat, too, worn by the Persian men would be a very suitable tunic for ladies, as it fits well to the figure, and comes down nearly as low as the ankles. This with a nice smart wide-awake with feather would make as nice a travelling dress for a lady as could be desired, thus leaving the field free for dressmakers to provide the attire for the house.

I find that the Furrungee officer who has been visiting these parts is in the service of the Shah. It is difficult to make out a European name from the pronunciation of an Asiatic, but I am told that his name is spelt on his seal with the Persian letters be, he, lam, and re, which would make Bahlur. However, I dare say, I shall find out when I get to Tehran. He visited all the chief places in Khorassan, and then went on to Seestan, staying altogether more than a year.

In the afternoon of the 10th of June, the Amir sent a man with a request that I would value a lot of rifles, guns, pistols and watches which he sent. Now this was rather a difficult task, especially for me. I have not had much to do with buying or valuing firearms of any kind, and I never *bought* a watch in my life. However, I did my best, and wrote the prices in Persian on each, at the same time giving the Amir a bit of advice. I said if one does not know thoroughly the proper value of such articles, the best thing to do is never to buy anything that does not come from some

well known shop. There are shops, such as—(and here I gave him names)—whose name is a sufficient guarantee that the article is good, and so I would recommend you always to stick to these. He was much pleased with this information, and as I gave him a list of all the good names I could think of, we will trust that in future he won't be cheated, and the vendors will only realize their due profits.

Here I must close my notes for the day. The fact is I am in a vile temper. I have just for the five hundredth time broke my head against one of these accursed low Persian doors. These never reach a greater height than 4′ 6″ to 5′, whether to make you bow low on your entrance, or to place your neck in convenient attitude for decapitation I don't know, but the fact is, that one invariably comes a thud against them. So much is this the case, that I would not recommend any one above 4′ 6″, or who has not a very thick head, and the temper of an angel ever to visit Persia. Their steps are also most frightful; in the first place, they are generally about three feet high, and are always broken, and you have to make a succession of jumps up, like a chamois in the Alps, and then, at the top, just when you should have enough room to draw yourself up to the height God made you, you come to a door only fitted for Tom Thumb.

Now, having abused Persian houses, let me see what there is to be said in their favour. They, I mean the houses of the middle classes, are all built on the same plan, *i.e.*, round a courtyard, which generally has a tree or two, and some ugly flowers in it. If possible there is a stream of water flowing through. The rooms are of the most miserable description, dark, stuffy, dirty, without any furniture, but there is always one of a

better kind. This is in the centre, and is arched, with a window extending the whole height of the arch. The arched roofs are certainly very pretty, much superior to the dreary monotony of an ordinary English roof, and there is so much variety in their forms that I think they are well worthy of adoption by us; especially as, with English taste, they might be very prettily ornamented. In these rooms there are always several little arched niches, which take off the monotony of the dead white wall. These also, I think, merit the attention of our architects, as they would form appropriate recesses for statuettes, books, curiosities, vases, &c., without their being in constant danger of being thrown down, as they are now, by awkward husbands, brothers, or other uninteresting specimens of the male sex, when they loll about ladies' drawing-rooms. These centre rooms are the only ones which have any light; in them indeed, unless the light is modified, as it is in the houses of the rich, by coloured glass, there is rather too much, for the window extends over the whole space occupied by the arch, and is in fact of the same size. The upper part or bow of the arch is fixed, but in the lower part there are sashes which pull up and down. The whole window is filled up with an arabesque of wood and stained glass, and, although I cannot admire the patterns of these much, or the colours chosen for the glass at all, it is evident the design is capable of being rendered very pretty.

There is a story going about here that the Russians have taken Maimana, and I asked the Amir to-day, when I went to say good-bye, about it. He confirmed it and seemed to believe it, saying, "It was quite possible, that Maimana was only a few days march from the Oxus, and it was well known the Russians

meant to take both it and Mowr." *I* do not believe it, but it is evident that people in these parts are quite prepared for such an event.

I said farewell to Meer Alum, and in doing so buttered him up, saying, it had been a great pleasure to me to make the acquaintance of one I had heard so much of before, and to find that the stories of his kindness and hospitality to strangers and of the good arrangements and safety of his country had not been exaggerated, but rather the contrary. I hoped when the time came he would be with us, but if his duty or inclinations induced him to side with the Russians, he would always find generous treatment from us. He has made a very favourable impression on me, and I hope it is not vanity alone which induces me to hope I have succeeded in doing the same with him. Meer Alum Khan, I afterwards learnt, had behaved in a very discourteous manner to the members of the Seestan Mission. Of course, with this I have nothing to do, and speak of him as I found him. The mission was there, as he considered, to deprive him of more or less of the territory he had for years been scheming to acquire, and it was, therefore, at all events natural, that his feeling towards the members should not have been of a very cordial nature.

On Friday, June 11, I made a short march of seven miles to Boojd to get clear of the town. This village is clearly in the district of Birjund and is built on the south side of the same ridge. Above all is a ruined fort, and then come the houses built in terraces down the slope, while below is a carpet of green fields extending for a radius of about three quarters of a mile. Altogether the scene is a pretty one. I was lodged to-day in the most delightful little garden house

imaginable. It was a domed building about fourteen feet square and the same in height; in short, about the size of an Indian hill tent. In the centre was a basin, six feet long by three feet broad and two feet deep, and through this ran a stream of the most delightfully cool, clear water. Outside there was a porch round which vines twined, affording shade from the sun, and food, in the shape of delicious purple grapes, at the same time. It was a sort of place to dream away days in, and, as I told the old gardener, I should like to stay there always. Then came a vision of bliss, lying on one's back, with cool water unceasingly murmuring at your side, the cool air blowing ever fresh, and the fragrance of the flowers breathing incense. No more bother about manzils,* no more squabbles with muleteers, no more blazing sun, or fierce witheringly cold wind, here I would remain. I fancy many such dreams come over hot, dust-stained, weary travellers, only to be dissipated, as in my case, when rest was complete.

Boojd is built along the side of a low ridge which runs down the centre of the valley of Birjund, the houses being erected in terraces right up the hill so as to leave all the level ground for cultivation. It is a picturesque village and has a large radius of cultivation, cotton and wheat chiefly, with numerous jujube trees, mulberries, and poplars. It is plentifully supplied with water by Kareez from the Koh Bageeran hills to the SE. About half the inhabitants of this place are Soonees. It has been chosen by Sirdar Behbood Khan Alekiouzye, grandson of Yar Mahomed of Herat, as his residence. He fled from Herat, when it was taken by Dost Mahomed, and after

* Stages.

some capricious treatment by the Persian authorities, settled down here and acquired some property. With him are several Afghans and Heratis. The whole of the south of the cultivation of this village is defended by an embankment from the floods, which evidently at times sweep down with great force from the hills. To the south Boojd has an importance as being the place whence all the roads to the east of Birjund radiate viz., to Herat, Subzwar, Furrah, Lash and Seestan. There is a dilapidated fort here above the village, but it is completely looked into from a higher part of the spur.

I had a visit while here from Sirdar Behbood Khan, above mentioned. He is a good specimen of the exiled prince. Clever, talkative, full of hopes, of assertions, and of promises. He has, he says, a party in Herat, and with the aid of the 50,000* sabres of his own tribe, the Ali Kiouzyes, Inshalla! will one day show these usurping dogs of Baruckzyes a lesson. He amused me immensely by making a great show of secrecy in our interview. He dismissed his attendants, and I suppose will give out that he has concluded a treaty, offensive and defensive, with the "Ingleez." He talks most volubly, and, seemingly a perfect master of the Persian language, often went so fast that I could not follow him. I do not know what influence he may have with the Ali Kiouzyes; but, considering he has been so long away, and that even Yar Mahomed was not very much mixed up with them, I should doubt its being very great; and I think the same may be said of his party

* This is not a bad specimen of the lie Afghan. I find, on turning to that invaluable work, "Central Asia, Part II., Afghanistan," that the Ali Kiouzyes could turn out, perhaps, 1,000 men; 850 being the largest number they are ever known to have raised.

at Herat. He is not a man I should be inclined to trust, unless he could give very much better proof of fidelity than is contained in the assertions of an exile. However, he is clever, and might be of use to us some day. He says that Meer Alum is very well inclined to the English, and that he thinks that, when the time comes, he would join us. However this may be, I think Meer Alum is worth making some push to secure.

From the top of the ridge above Boojd there is a very capital view of the whole country right up to the next stage, which I proposed to make at Isfizar, and Mood. This, unfortunately, induced me to make the next march at night; but I was well punished for my pains. About 2 A.M., after the moon went down, the most tremendous wind came on, which blew with a fierceness I have never seen equalled; and, although the middle of June, it was so cold that not even a fur coat kept me warm, and I was shivering till the sun got up. This wind seems to be common all over this part of Khorassan, as I see Clerk mentions it at Khaf, and it is probably the same as the "bad-y-sud-o-beest roz" of Seestan. My informants say it blows steadily for four months every day, but it is only felt in exposed situations. In sheltered valleys, like Birjund, Boojd, and, as I afterwards found, Foorg, there is scarcely any wind, but situations like Sehdeh and Isfizar receive its full force. It is most disagreeable, and makes living under canvas a constant worry lest one's tent, and with it all one's valuable papers, should be sent on a journey to Seestan or the desert of Loot. There are only a few houses at Isfizar, and a little cultivation. The fort is, strange to say, not commanded, and, being in tolerable repair, would not be easy to capture.

The road from Boojd, after getting over the above mentioned ridge, goes all over a hard gravelly plain, which forms the bed of the valley, draining to Birjund. The road is quite practicable for artillery, and there are several "ab-ambars" on it. Several villages are passed at the end, viz., that of Belook at 17 miles, Hoosenabad at 17½, and Tenaka at 18½, after which, passing through some fields and getting on to higher ground, Isfizar comes in sight.

This place consists of some houses inside a fortlet, fixed in a commanding position, and a few outside. This fort would doubtless be a hard nut to crack if only infantry were employed, as its walls are very high, and it is not commanded in any way. There was a very civil individual here who came and offered to do anything for me; but the fact was, I was quite overcome with the last night's march. This was by no means a long one, but the wind had such an effect on my bones that I felt just as if I had ridden a couple of hundred miles and been beaten at the end of it. Therefore, directly the mules came in I threw myself down on my bed in my clothes, and did not move until near sundown.

When I awoke I had something to eat, and then went up to the fort to have a look round, but on arrival I found there was evidently a disinclination to let me in. This, however, I soon got over, and climbing up to the top of the high tower, I was rewarded with a very fair view. Away to the S. lay the Bageeran range, dividing Birjund from Neh; to the N. lay the Koh Mohmeenabad or Mainabad, and I took the following bearings, viz.:—Godar Darman, 1½ f., 58°; Foorg, 102°; Sar-y-chah, 355°; Sar-y-beseh, 155°; Bushtgaz, 110°, and one farsuck distant; and Famood, 205°.

There are direct roads from this place to Sar-y-beseh and Room.

From Isfizar the road ascends gradually for about five miles, when there is a sharp little ascent to the top of a pass over the main range of the Mohmeenabad ridge, itself a continuation of the Saman Shakee range. From the top of this pass, which is called the Godar Darmian, there is a fine view of high hills; to the NE. the Koh Gazeeh range, and to the SW. the Bageeran. The road then descends rather steeply into the head of the Durra Meean valley or glen; but neither the ascent or descent of this pass is very difficult, and both could easily be made practicable for guns. A short distance on a stream of water is reached, and the path goes along it the whole way into Durra Meean, which is a considerable village of about 200 houses in the midst of a perfect garden of luxuriant cultivation, which extends over every inch of cultivable ground in the glen, which, however, is only about 500 or 600 yards broad, continuing down it for three miles further, when it joins that of the village of Foorg. On entering the latter village I could find no one to tell me where I was to go, but at last I was directed to a house which they told me was the Naib's Mehman khana.* On entering this, however, I was again disappointed to find the place full of Toorkmuns passing through on a visit to Birjund, for the purpose, I suppose, of ransoming their brethren whom I had seen there. These gentlemen not being desirable companions, I declined to stay in the house, and this resolution was considerably strengthened by the thought that it would be as well to keep as much away from the Toorkmuns as possible. To say the truth, their presence had rather disconcerted me;

* Guest house.

for the road by which I was going to Herat was reported to be regularly Toorkmun-ridden, and I did not in the least like meeting people who might give notice of my coming to some party lurking in the vicinity.

I am rather surprised, I confess, at these men being allowed to go about so freely. They were not under any sort of surveillance, and so I suppose they will on their return endeavour to indemnify themselves for any loss they may have been put to in ransoming their comrades. I should have expected that no Toorkmun would have been allowed to enter Persian territory on any account whatever, and cannot conceive why the Amir should be so careless. It is true this is exactly what we do ourselves on the north-west frontier, where Mohmunds, Afredees, Vazeerees, and every sort of ruffian are allowed to enter our territory, fully armed, and leave it just as they like. I never could see the justice of thus giving these scoundrels every chance of robbing our subjects with impunity; but one can understand the sort of milk-and-water arguments on which the practice is based, having weight with a Government so humane as ours. I was, luckily, always very careful never to talk about the route I was going, so none of my people were very wise about this; and, as I gave out that my intention was to go to Seestan, I hoped to put any one making disagreeable inquiries quite on the wrong scent. Going on, therefore, from this, I next rode up to the Naib's house, but finding he was away, I pitched my tent a little way off the village, beyond the track of the people, but still near enough for protection, and by the stream of running water.

Foorg has a considerable name in these parts as a place of strength, and this is not altogether undeserved.

It was visited on the 20th of June, 1841, thirty-four years before, by the unfortunate and lamented Dr. Forbes, who was then passing through it on his way to Seestan, where he met his death at the hands of a treacherous hound named Ibraheem, Khan of Chuckhansoor, as described by Ferrier and Khanikoff, and later by Bellew. Dr. Forbes calls it Furk, and as his description is a very correct one, and is probably not available to the generality of readers, I will take the liberty of here transcribing it:—"It is situated on a hill, about 200 or 250 feet high, but is commanded by hills to the north and west, within cannon-shot (point blank): another hill to the southward, on the opposite side of the ravine, is about 1,200 yards from the summit to the walls of the fort. The building itself is of an oblong square form, with three tiers or ranges of building; the foundations and lower half of the walls and houses being of undressed stone and lime, and at the upper and inner parts partly hewn from the rock (limestone) on which it stands. The upper portions of the walls, houses, and battlements, are a mixture of stone, mud, and crude brick, and in some places are of mud and crude brick only, which is already crumbling to pieces. At the angles of the walls there are round towers of stone and crude brick loop-holed, as are also the outer walls; the whole, however, is clumsily and unskilfully built, and a few rounds of shot would probably bring down an entire side of the structure. The gateway is on the eastern side, partly covered by the houses of the village, but without other defences. Within the fort there are three large tanks, said to be sufficient for the supply of a large garrison for a year and a half; the water comes from a spring in one of the hills to the westward, and is conveyed to the fort by a covered

aqueduct. A large store of corn is usually kept here, and the granaries can hold from 2,400 to 2,600 kharwars* of 100 Kayin, or 50 Tabriz mans† (each). When the Shah was besieging Herat, 18,000 kayin kharwars are said to have been supplied to his army at once from Foorkg." The fort of Foorg presents an imposing and picturesque appearance, but I am afraid the gentleman who chose its site was not an adept at the *art militaire*, for it is commanded in so many directions as to be quite untenable; from one hill to the north you might literally stone the garrison out. It may be reputed to be one of the strongest places in Khorassan, but it certainly is not strong. The fact is, that the Asiatic mind regards any place that is high and built on a scarped rock on the top of a hill as strong, without thinking whether other circumstances, such as higher hills near, or a precarious supply of water, may not more than annul the advantages it derives from mere inaccessibility. There is a garrison of thirty men in this fort. The Naib of this place is one Ghulam Reza, a pleasant individual, with a Mongolian cast of countenance. He came to see me, and we had a long talk. He praised the Amir very much, saying he was a real Hakim. It appears the Scientific Mission of Khanikoff came here also, so it is pretty evident they have been all over Khorassan; and, as I said before, it is a blessing the intentions of Russia are so peaceful. It is an interesting scientific fact, that in Foorg there is storage for rations for 30,000 men for one month, and this interest is not decreased by a knowledge that the store rooms are full now. Another fact, which no doubt also proved most interesting to the scientific body

* Kharwar is an ass load.

† Man is 40 to 84 lbs., according to the district.

who sent M. Khanikoff and his companions forth to benefit the world by their researches, is that there are plenty of donkeys to carry this wheresoever it may be necessary.

I regret much I did not get a sketch of Foorg, but I put it off till too late, and I had not time to spare next morning. From a hill above it, to the south-west, I got the following bearings:—Guzeek, 57°; exit of Foorg River from hills, 72°; Tubbus, 106°; Saman Shahee range from 247° to 106°; from 108° to 142° are three distinct ranges, the third running nearly up to Tubbus; a high hill, probably Koh Gazeek, 45°; the village of Taghun, four miles off, 45°, the village of Savoor, 30°.

From Foorg to Guzeek the road first goes over a plain for eight miles, then over a jumpy sort of range, which looks as if it had not quite made up its mind whether to be easy or impracticable, for another ten, and then a low, but steep pass is ascended, and Guzeek is at your feet—a patch of green in the midst of brown rugged hills. This place is the frontier village of Khorassan on this road, and is situated in an amphitheatre about two miles in diameter, surrounded on all sides but the SSE. by hills. It is a very ugly, uninteresting village, with domed-roofed hovels and the inevitable fort, which accompanies all Khorassan villages.

The cultivation of this place has a diameter of about three miles, the village being situated in the south-east corner under the hill. The principal production seems to be wheat, and in the gardens, mulberries. The village has 300 houses and a strongish little fort on a mound in the centre. The inhabitants are Soonees, and supply forty sowars for the defence of this frontier against the Toorkmuns. There is good water in abundance and supplies are plentiful. Two roads lead from

this to the Zeerkoh district, one direct over the hills, the other round towards Aliwaz.

It is the usual residence of the Amir's Warden of the Frontier, Mahamad Ishmail Khan, who was unfortunately absent, but who left orders that I was to be his guest. The Amir ordered that I should have six sowars to see me safe into inhabited parts again, and all to-day I have been making careful inquiries as to the best road to adopt. I have a choice of three. The first goes from this south-east to Anardara, which is three stages off, and it is said to be the safest, but it takes me at least four days out of my road. The second goes to Subzwar in six stages, but has little water and no villages, and is much out of the way also. The third is the direct and best road to Herat, and has water at all stages, but it is the most dangerous. Every one, however, assures me that now there is but little danger from Toorkmuns, and there is an Afghan Kafila now coming over it, so I have determined to risk it, and hope to get through all right. I do not mean to dawdle anywhere, but get through as quickly as my animals will go. The real reason, however, that weighs most with me, is an earnest desire to clear up the question of the connection of the mountain system of the Hindoo Koosh with that of Persia. If I go to Anardara or Subzwar, I go directly away from the possibility of seeing this; but by taking the direct road, if there is a range, I must go along it the whole way. Another thing is, that I shall be able to pick up accurate information as to the real frontier of Persia in this direction, a matter on which I know the Indian Government have no information, though knowledge of the subject may one day be of great use to us. The precautions I am taking will, I trust, secure our getting through all right; and having done

this, the rest is in God's hands. First, I do not march on the exact road, but a little off it, so as not to fall into any trap; secondly, I have six sowars, and have arranged to arm all my servants, so that we make a party of eleven in all; thirdly, I have explained and practised what should be done if we have to stand and fight—that is, all the loads are to be thrown off in a circle, and every man will get behind them, tying the animals as best we can; fourthly, I am preceded by a look-out man to warn me of danger, and followed by another man, whose duty it will be to carry back news at once to the nearest stage, whence another man will carry it in here to Meer Nazr Beg, the commander of the sowars, who has promised faithfully to come up as sharp as he can. So it is to be hoped we shall "sarkumvent" the Toorkmuns after all. The worst of these devils is that they sometimes come in such large bodies (200 to 300) that it would be useless to fight; if they only behaved like gentlemen, and came in decent odds, say five or six to one, one would not mind, but enjoy a brush with them rather. It would be a new experience in the art of war at least.

I got off from Guzeek all right on the 14th, and my guide took me the long but level road round by Ahwaz, instead of straight over the hill. He seemed to have the savage's usual contempt of the powers of endurance of civilized beings, and treated one as if one were a woman. Alee Akbar* (this individual's name) is a regular old border rider, having been engaged in frontier fights

* I notice that the guide who went with Dr. Forbes was named Alee Akbar also. I regret much I did not know this at the time, as it now occurs to me that they may have been one and the same man. My Alee Akbar was a man of a very uncertain age—anything from fifty to seventy. He never said that he had been with any other European, but this may have been because Dr. Forbes's journey ended fatally.

with Owghans (as they term the Afghans), Baloches, and Toorkmuns for the last thirty years. During this time he has acquired a very accurate knowledge of all the roads, and of the ways of the Toorkmuns.

After leaving the village of Ahwaz, or Abas, a little to our right, we entered the hills, which are quite easy and open, the road going through a miniature defile, called the Dehan Ahwaz, for three miles, whence it emerges and goes over easy open hills for one mile; then over spurs from the range on the left, in a direction of 30° for three miles, to an easy pass over the main range. It then descends into the bed of a stream, in which it continues for half a mile, and then over a vast, barren, stony, desolate plain, in a direction of 70° to 75°. At the tenth mile I stopped and took some bearings. The view was very extensive. In a direction 55° there was a range, which Alee Akbar told me was the Koh Kabuda; then from 25° to 155°, behind it, was another range in echelon. Then there was an open space with no hills visible, and then from another range far away to the south, apparently connected, or nearly so, with the Koh Guzeek, called the hills of Doroh and Lanoo, places on the road from Farah to Birjund. This, however is not very clear; but if there is any connection, it must be a long way off.

The rest of the road was over an immense plain without a particle of cover. I had arranged that one of my men should go on two or three miles ahead, but when they saw the plain they did not like the look of it, so I agreed to go on by myself, leaving Alee Akbar with the baggage, and also detaching another man two miles to the rear, to gallop off and get us help if we were attacked. Every now and then I stopped, and, getting off my horse, swept the whole plain for sign of living

thing. More than once a cloud of dust in the distance made the blood in my veins run quicker, for I knew if we were seen now there was no escape; but, fortunately, it turned out to be wild donkeys skurrying over the plain.

In this manner we marched, and reached a place called Boory Goolwurda, about fifteen miles from Guzeek, about 1 P.M.

This place is simply a tower erected on a low ridge which runs across the plain near a pool of bad water. As we were coming up I noticed rather a commotion among the garrison of this important post, which consisted of two decrepid old gentlemen, and on arriving found there was reason for it, for on going to the top of the hill, and looking in the direction pointed, I saw a party of horse marching swiftly across the front in compact order. This was an "alaman" or raiding party of Toorkmuns, and my readers may imagine the interest with which I watched them, though they were too far off to make out much. They seemed to number about one hundred men, and luckily did not seem to have any intentions in our direction, for they passed without once looking our way. I took very good care to make all my men keep down below the hill till they had disappeared, and then came the question what was to be done. We had providentially escaped this party, for if we had arrived half an hour before, and they had seen us on the hill, they would have probably understood there was game about, and waited for us. As it was, they seemed to have made up their minds to go on, and they disappeared in the direction of the hills of Doroh, far away to the south. But it was, of course, quite uncertain how long it might be before they returned, or what road they would take, so I

thought it best to get out of their neighbourhood at once. Before leaving, however, I determined to have a good look round, and thinking there would be no objection to my getting up into the tower, I began to climb up the very precarious ascent, by means of a few holes dug out of the mud wall at intervals, a sort of place a cat might negotiate, but extremely difficult for me with my sword and riding boots. I was, however, saved the trouble, for, before I got far, I heard a half-frightened, half-fierce, yet squeaky voice call out, "What are you doing?" and looking up as well as I could, I saw one of the old wretches with his head out of the hole by which the tower was entered, with a lighted matchlock. "Coming up," I said. "No, you are not, go down," shrieked the old villain; "no one shall come in here." As, if I had persisted, in another step or two the old man might have literally blown my head to pieces, and I was not well acquainted with the manners and customs of the people in these parts, I thought discretion, in this case, was the better part of valour, and so slid down, feeling very small. On reaching the bottom, I called out, and asked "Why I was not allowed in? I was only wanting to take a look round." But the guardian of the tower replied defiantly, "I don't care, if you want to look round, you had better do so from where you are, you are not coming up here." Then Alee Akbar tried his hand at persuasion, but to no effect, the old wretch was unmovable. "We might be friends," he said, "but then we might not." If we wanted water there it was, if we wanted flour he would let us have some, but no one should get up into that tower.

Thus denied the more extensive view I should have had from the tower, I was forced to content myself by

taking some bearings from below. In the direction where we had come the Guzeek range stretched from 320° to 200°, then from 200° to 125° there were two small ranges, called the Koh Kareli, which seemed to run from north-west to south-east, and beyond which were the hills of Anardara. The Koh Kabuda closed the view from 105° to 32°, and then from this right round to 320° was quite open.

There was a range, which was called Koh Gazoon, which seemed to be a continuation of the Guzeek range, and which ran on in the direction of Lanoo, about fifty miles off.

After a short rest we went on again, in a direction of 38°-for eight miles, then 20° all over an open level plain, partly covered with sand, to the twelfth mile, when, ascending slightly over undulating hilly grounds, we came, at the twentieth mile, to the spring of Shorab, where the water was quite brackish, but still drinkable. Here we stayed for the night, but I took the precaution to leave the spring, and going over an undulation, we bivouacked a short way from it. I allowed no fires to be lit, and told off the party into watches, but I am afraid no one save my boy and I kept awake their appointed time, and I don't wonder at it, as I myself had the very greatest difficulty in doing so. We had had a very fatiguing day's ride, and the heat, combined with the glare on the white interminable plains we had passed, had been very trying.

At daybreak on the 17th Pascal woke me, and we went on our weary way again. The road first passed over undulating, hilly, but quite open ground, then over the same sort of plain as yesterday, in a direction of 50°, which continued to about the eighteenth mile, when, crossing another little ridge, we arrived at a spot called

Kabooda, a regular little oasis in this fearful desert. Here there was a swampy patch of ground, covered with reeds. Many small bushes, such as the tamarisk and oleander, grew around, and there was a small ruined tower. As the ground here was very confined, Alee Akbar rode up to me, and we went a long way ahead of our party, with the greatest caution. "If there are Toorkmuns about they will be here," said Alee Akbar, unslinging his carbine. So we crept on, I feeling very much like playing at hide and seek, till we emerged on a beautiful bit of green sward at the foot of the ruined tower. Tying my horse up, and letting him greedily devour the fresh green grass, I climbed up the tower, and quietly, with my ears open, and every sense on the *qui vive*, searched all round with my telescope for sign of lurking foe. Again and again I looked, and it was with a sigh of relief that I at last shut it up and shouted to Alee Akbar, "It is all right." The party then came up, and I let all the animals get a good graze before going on to our stage at Yezdoon, which was not far off. The sun here was very hot, there was not a breath of air stirring, and the place was swarming with a small species of midge, who as greedily eat us as our poor animals devoured the green grass. This place is said to be a favourite watering place for antelopes and wild donkeys. We saw many traces of the latter. The water, however, was most unpalatable, being filthy and salt, and I was glad indeed to find my power of bearing thirst stand me in good stead this day.

After an hour's halt we went on, and crossing a low hill we saw in the distance Yezdoon, which we reached without any mishap about 6 P.M. As we were nearing it we had noticed the Toorkmun towers, with which the whole plain is dotted, and on getting closer we

saw, at first, people scattered about through the fields. Presently a matchlock was fired from the high tower of the fort, and then there was a skedaddle marvellous to behold; and almost before we had time to look out, not a man was to be seen below; all had clambered up into the nearest tower. Seeing this, I thought it prudent to stop the party till we had assured them we were friends, so I rode on with only Alee Akbar towards the gate of the fort. After some doubt being thrown on his word the party inside became reassured, and presently the gate was opened, and about twenty heavily armed men came out, like prudent soldiers, cautiously, with one eye on us and the other on the gate. They were headed by a very fine young man, named Roostum, who came up to us quite alone, and when he found it was as we said, became profuse in his apologies, saying we must excuse them, they lived far away from every one, in the midst of a desert, where no man was a friend till he had proved himself so.

Nevertheless, when my people came up they would not let us inside the fort, but made us bivouac outside, near the little stream of water which irrigated their scanty cultivation. The distance of this day's journey was not less than thirty miles. The village of Yezdoon consists of a strong little fort, in the middle of a plain, in which are houses for about twenty families, and sixty matchlock men, who protect the cultivation around. There is a fair amount of good water here, and some supplies are procurable. This place affords a most useful, if not indispensable, stage on this road, as otherwise there would be no sweet water from Guzeek to Pahre, and it is doubtful if the road would be practicable. It lies right in the track of the Toorkmuns on their forays, so of course the inhabitants are unable to

stir out beyond their towers, and as only three or four Kafilas come through in a year, they are much to be pitied. The fort, Alam Khan informed me, he had erected to protect Kalifas from Toorkmun raids, but I suspect there was an *arrière pensée* in this arrangement, and the real reason was a wish to take in as much around as possible in the direction of the Afghan frontier.

After dark, Roostum, who became quite friendly, paid me a visit, and we had a long talk. Poor young fellow, he knew of nothing better; yet one could see that he yearned after a higher life than this, and I am afraid our coming must have unsettled him for a long time. He was very picturesquely got up, but was more like an Afghan than a Persian, wearing a huge turban of nondescript colour, and a brown shirt.

As soon as it was light next morning, I went into the fort, having induced Roostum to arrange for my entrance the night before. I went in quite alone, and only took with me my pistol, which I hid under a fold of my "Kummerbund."* At the gate I found Roostum, and he then took me by very break-neck steps that required considerable agility to surmount, till at last we got to the very top of the highest tower, much to the apparent dismay of sundry couples *en déshabille*, who were surprised asleep. From the summit of the tower, there was an extensive, but by no means beautiful view, for nothing met the eye but bleak barren plains, with rugged mountains in the far distance. From 270° to 360° stretched the range called Haniakoh, running east and west, a peak on it bearing 315°. From 15° to 75° was the Koh Manao, with a prominent peak about 25 miles off, bearing 35°.

* A scarf wound round the waist.

To the south-east was a curious isolated hill, called Koh Ishmael, which forms an excellent landmark on this road.

About 18 to 20 miles off, on a bearing of 125°, was a small detached range, the end of the Koh Kabuda hills we had come by bore 135°, while the most prominent peak of it was 198°. The village of Charakhs was said to bear 295°, and to be 40 miles distant (through it is a route which goes to Ghorian from Birjund *), at the foot of the Shash Koh, which is a continuation of the Anguran Koh. Khaf was said to be 18 furrucks, or about 70 miles, in a direction 305°; Subzwar, 50 miles 125°; and Anardara, 56 miles 135°.

We got off about five A.M. on the 18th. The road on leaving Yezdoon goes in a direction 75°, following a "Karez" which comes down from the hills to the north-east; it then, after being quite level for about twelve miles, gets among low hills, and ascends the shoulder of these for another eight or nine miles, to a well of very awful water, called Kulund. This was so bad that none of the animals would even look at it, though we, knowing there was no more till the spring of Mogulbackhe was reached, did all we could to make them drink. So, as there was no use staying here, we went on. I had brought some water with me to drink, also something to eat, so we pushed on at our best pace. The country was all very uninteresting, over an interminable plain. At 10 miles from Kulund I stopped, and got some bearings. On our left we had had the Koh Adam ridge, with

* This road is as follows—Sar-i-Chah, 23 miles; Darokh, 15 miles; Sehan, 15 miles; Mehreez, 10 miles: Charakhs, 15 miles; Gulleh Howz, 15 miles; Rabat-y-Luth, 22 miles; and Howz Ghorian, 16 miles. This is probably a better road than the one I followed, as it goes by villages—two of them, namely, Darokh and Charakhs, being large places.

another in front separating us from the Mogulbackhe, and behind this, at a distance apparently of 50 miles, was a high range running right round from 55° to 190°, a peak on it called Meer Allah bearing 95°.

The last five miles was over undulating ground, where one could not see much in front; but thinking myself pretty safe now, I followed the track at a good pace, till I got to a small descent into a valley, where there were two equally well marked tracks, so I had to wait till Alee Akbar came up. He decided for the southerly track; and in about a mile and a half we came to the well of Mogulbackhe, the water of which is sweet, cold, and pretty clear. To me it seemed like nectar.

It was now quite dark, and my men had not come up; so after a drink for myself, and one for my horse, I tied him up, and old Alee Akbar and I trudged back to the point where we had lost the road, and waited till we should hear something of my people. We dared not call, as we did not know who might be hid in the hollows, so we lay down on the ground, and waited. Before long we heard sounds of horses coming, and presently saw our animals looming in the distance. On their coming up we all went to the well, where it was pleasant to watch the eagerness with which my men and the poor animals drank.

I must not forget to mention a scare we had shortly after leaving Kulund. Far away ahead, on getting over a little rise, I noticed a cloud of dust, a cloud too big to be created by wild asses, who had been the cause of many false alarms; so I got off and looked through my telescope. It seemed clear that there were nothing but horsemen, so I went back at once, and stopped my people below the undulation, and then brought Alee

Akbar up with me. Unfortunately, he had very bad eyesight, and could make nothing of my telescope, so I had to look through it, and tell him what I saw. No doubt this complicated matters more, as, in addition to the difficulty of seeing, my report had to be conveyed to, and interpreted by, old Alee Akbar. Suffice it to say, that though for five minutes I was in a state of very great anxiety, it turned out that it was a caravan of mules on the way to Birjund. During these few minutes all the stories I had ever heard of Toorkmun cruelty to their prisoners tried hard to obtain my whole attention, but luckily my mind was too much occupied in finding out whether there really was danger, and if so, in determining what we should do.

Before I found out the real state of the case, I had settled that we should all make the best of our way to a low ridge, about a mile to the north and there lay *perdu* till the danger was over. There was just a chance that we might get there in time, as the caravan was fully three miles off when we first saw it, and my having taken the precaution of not marching on the track, but a little to the north of it, might prevent them seeing our marks, and thus suspecting something. Having made sure in our minds it was a Kafila, I thought the best thing to do, was to show ourselves, so as to prevent alarm causing them to fire at us. So getting up, I put myself at the head of my party and rode towards them. Directly they saw us there was evidently great alarm; they all huddled together and seemed quite irresolute what to do. Then I sent Alee Akbar on at a canter, and presently a couple of the opposite side came out, and it soon became evident to them, that we were at all events not Toorkmuns. Poor devils, they must have been in as great a funk as I was; and so when

we came up it was with a sort of friendly feeling, that I spoke to the Kafila-bashi, and inquired whether his 'dimagh' was 'chagh.'* If one is in a danger with a stranger, and both happen to behave well, a friendly feeling springs up, begotten of mutual admiration; and when one is in a danger, and neither behaves particularly well, still there is a feeling of friendliness begotten of mutual forbearance. So it was here; we had not perhaps been together, but the Kafila-bashi and I had felt the same sensation, almost at the same moment, and that feeling may be expressed in the words—"D—n those Toorkmuns, I wish I were at home."

They said they had been waiting at Herat for a long time for a chance to get through, without going the roundabout road by Furrah, and Doru, and when they heard that a party of Toorkmuns had gone to visit Birjund with a view of getting the release of some of their fraternity, they thought that it would be the best possible time, and determined to risk it. What then were their feelings of anguish, when they thought they had just mistimed their effort, and had fallen into the hands of those whom they were so anxious to avoid. In token at least of *my* joy at finding that my new acquaintance, Ibrahim Tabasi, was not leading a party of Toorkmuns, I begged his acceptance of a loaf of sugar, with which the Amir Mahamad Alam had loaded me, and we parted excellent friends.

At Mogulbackhe Alee Akbar considered our dangers nearly over. Immediately to the north of us lay Ghorian, where he said a force of Cavalry was kept up, and always on the look-out for prowling bands of Toorkmuns. Moreover the Koh Doshakh range was

* Whether his health was good.

here evidently not negotiable by horsemen. I therefore let my servants light a fire and get some chupatties for supper; my only bit of meat having gone quite bad in the sun. The air here at night was deliciously cool, and so I think we all enjoyed a pleasant sleep, not excluding, I am pretty sure, the look-out men, who were told, and swore solemnly, to keep awake.

Next morning we went on twenty miles to Pahre over the same utterly uninteresting waste, covered with thorn scrub, with brown hills now near on the right, now far off on the left. Pahre is the first village in Afghanistan in this direction, though the frontier of Afghanistan is acknowledged to lie some ten miles out of Yezdoon. We had thus come over fifty miles in Afghan territory without meeting a single soul except the stray caravan, till we got right into the village, and even then very few people took any notice of us, till we had got right into the heart of it.

Shortly after leaving Kulund we crossed a low watershed which divides the drainage of the Hurree Rood, from the isolated basins we had been coming through.

Pahre is a small village of 100 houses, and immediately on entering I noticed two or three facts which sufficiently showed that we had left Persia. The houses were all the same, but were not built scattered about like Persian villages, each separate house having a sort of enclosure to itself, thus showing the total difference of the people I was now amongst from those whom I had just quitted. When my servants were pitching the tent, there was the usual crowd enjoying the novel spectacle of a Furrungee; but whereas I had marched over 1,000 miles in Persia and had never once been offered the slightest assistance by any of the crowd, here several men came forward and assisted in driving in pegs, &c.

Another circumstance was the openness with which the women went about. So much was this the case, that in a quarter of an hour I saw more of the women than I had seen during two months in Persia. Every one, generally, was very civil; and though there was a decided absence of the polish of the Persians, I had a feeling of being more at home amongst them. There were no more black hats, or light blue coats, or shaven faces; but here I saw the blue loongee,* the dirty white clothes and bushy beards which my journeys on the NW. frontier of India had made me acquainted with.

Immediately on my arrival I inquired for a scribe, and sent off to Herat the sort of letter I always wrote when nearing a place of any importance, asking for a lodging, and explaining my reasons for travelling. I had not done this before, as in the first place it was quite impossible to get any one to go on with a letter; and, secondly, it would have been madness to have sent on intelligence of my movements, and thus have prepared any prowling band of Toorkmuns for my arrival. However, the headman of the village was very civil, and said he now felt happy; he always knew the English would come back to Herat, he had constantly prayed he might live to see the day, and now his prayer was granted, for had I not appeared as if it were from heaven, and ridden almost alone across a track no Persian would dream of traversing without a hundred horsemen at his tail. And then he said, after despatching a man on horseback with my letter for the Moostoufee, "What more can I do? speak: the village is yours, the whole country is yours, I know how generous and just you English are. Why," he continued, addressing his followers, "I remember Tod Sahib,

* A cloth worn round the loins and passed between the legs.

and Taylor Sahib, and I can tell you your Kismut (luck) is great, that another Englishman has come amongst you."

There was, doubtless, a great deal of humbug in all this, and I was not in the least taken in by it, for I knew too much of the Afghan character to expect sincerity from any one tainted with Afghan blood; but I could not help believing that it foreshadowed something of the feeling with which men of my nation were regarded in the Herat valley. Here, among the villagers, no English force had ever come, so there had never been blood between us; instead, only upright open-handed English D'Arcy Todd, scattering money and trying to save the people from tyranny. And then, the Governor of Herat was, I was told, one of the most trusted of the Amir Shere Alee's officials, and that potentate had been so well treated by us that there could be no doubt I should receive excellent treatment at his hands. So it was without an anxious thought that I sent my letter, and then turned with a will to the excellent grill my incomparable Pascal had meanwhile prepared.

While my messenger is speeding away to the city I have so longed to see, let me say a few words of the country I have passed over. I regret to say that I am not yet sure of the run of the range which connects the Afghan mountain system with that of Persia. I had hoped to have traced it on my right the whole way to the Shah Beed pass, but immediately after crossing the Guzeek range, found this was not the case, nor did I discover throughout the distance to Pahre, any semblance of a range running as I thought it did. I, however, took careful bearings as I went along, and ascertained, as far as possible, the

names, the origin, and destination, of every hill seen, also carefully observing the run of the drainage. From the inquiries I submit the following, which though quite a new view of the lie of the country, I believe to be practically correct. First, then, the main range does not go near the road I took at all, but immediately after the Shah Beed pass turns S., parallel with the road to Sŭbzwar, whence it turns to the SW. parallel with the Huroot Rood, and then NW. parallel with the Birjund Furrah road to the Tubbus hills, whence it is connected with the Koh Bageeran, which bounds the Birjund valley on the south, and with the Koh Mohmenabad, which I crossed between Isfazar and Foorg, and which itself runs on to the Khoneek pass, above Sehdeh.

The drainage of the space between the northern face of the Doroh hills, the eastern slope of the Ghaeen range, and the southern side of the Khaf range, I believe to be as follows. First, it does not enter the Hurree Rood by the Karat Rood, cutting the Dushakh ridge, as is shown in our maps, nor does it drain to the Huroot Rood, or to the Hurree Rood direct. All the drainage of this space is absorbed into three great depressions, called "Daks," that is the drainage of Neembolook, of Ghaeen, and of Khaf Paeens goes to the Dak-i-Diwalan; that of the Zeerkoh tract, which includes all to the east of the Anguran range, including Goolwarden, Yezdoon, and Kulund, drains into the Dall-i-Khoorshab, close to Koh Kabooda; while that of Foorg, Daramian, Ahwaz, &c., drains to the Dak-i-Toondee, fifteen farsakhs from Ahwaz, and a portion from Mogulbackhe to Pahre, runs direct into the Hurree Rood. This may seem at first sight a rather startling statement, but it is not in reality so. In the first place,

it must be remembered that the process of denudation of the surrounding hills, which is constantly going on, must have a tendency to create the low ridges which cause these depressions; and as there is not sufficient water to keep a way open for itself, and moreover, the soil is salt, what there is is rapidly evaporated and sucked in, it is easy to see how these drainage beds have lost the power of discharging themselves to what, no doubt, should be their proper exit, the Hurree Rood.

CHAPTER VIII.

PAHRE TO KAREEZ.

ALL day I was busily engaged in writing up my journal and getting my map sketched in, so, as I had not got in till latish, it was nearly dark before I had finished. The people of the village were very civil, bringing me everything I wanted, and even sending a man off to a distant village to see if some grapes could not be got for me. After dinner I tried to sleep, but I lay awake all night thinking of what I should do next day, and during my stay at Herat. I never doubted for an instant that my reception would be most cordial; the extremely friendly relations of our Government with that of the Amir, made that in my mind almost a certainty; and the profuse attentions of the villagers at the first Afghan village I had arrived at, was a good augury for the future.

Before I turned in, I had informed the headman of the village, that I proposed starting very early next morning, in order to reach Herat before it got very hot, and also to give me time to change my travel-stained clothes for the one respectable suit I had—an undress uniform, which I had found most useful when visiting officials at Sheeraz, Yuzd, Tubbus, and Birjund. He agreed to be ready himself to guide me to the next village, saying he would willingly go the whole way with me, but he did not trust the people in

the city, who might detain him. He was much pleased with the idea of the task before him, and no doubt already saw some of the Furrungee's coins sticking to his own fingers; and the old scribe of the place added, he was glad I was going to put on uniform, as though he knew from a visit he had made to Shikapore, the "Sahiban alishan," did not often wear uniform, still the Moostoufee Sahib would be sure to appreciate the compliment.

Accordingly about three, I got up, and sending old Badrooe to rouse the headman, we got off just as day was breaking. Before, however, I had traversed many hundred yards, and just as we were rounding a small swelling which hid the ground beyond, a couple of horsemen came suddenly over the hill, and galloping up to me, said in a loud dictatorial tone, "Where is the Sahib?" I replied, "I am the Sahib." He then said in a most insolent manner, "What do you mean by leaving your 'manzil' without orders? Go back, you have no permission to go on." At this I was naturally considerably taken aback and rather nettled, and knowing Afghans too well to let myself be bullied by them, I went close up to him, and said very quietly and distinctly, "Who — the —— are you, that you talk to an Englishman like that?" "I come from the Moostoufee, Sahib," he replied. "I am sure," I said, "the Moostoufee never told you to come up to me in that swaggering manner; but what do you want?" On this he became more civil and quiet in his manner, and said, "I am sent to make the usual (ahwal-poorsees) inquiries about you which are usual in Afghanistan, and the Moostoufee hopes you will rest yourself a day here." "What!" I said, "go back to Pahre?" He then gave me a letter which contained instructions to the

same purport. After I had read it, Shah Mahamad, the bearer of the letter, said, in a most overbearing way, "You are not to go on, you must come back, I must find out who you are and what you want here." I replied that I was a traveller, as I had informed the Moostoufee, and that if he wished for any more information, I'd be very glad to give it, and that the best way to do this would be for me to go and see the Moostoufee himself, especially as all my baggage had started. He replied, in the same insolent manner, "It does not matter, you must come back." I then said, "This is a very extraordinary reception, and quite contrary to what I have received everywhere else." He replied, "It is the custom in Afghanistan, and what is more, in England also; don't tell me, I know all about English rules." Seeing that speaking further with him would only expose me to more of his impertinence, I said, "Very well, I will go back," and turning my horse's head, returned to the village. When he saw I did what he wanted he became more civil, and said, "If I would go back to Pahre, he would order everything to be done for my comfort, and it would after all only be delaying me a day." Finding that it would be of no use to make difficulties, I then said, "Very well, I will go back, I have no wish to go against your instructions; but I must say, I think you might take on yourself the responsibility of letting me proceed, as I informed the Moostoufee on all necessary points in my letter."

This was very annoying; however, as there was no help for it, I acquiesced in the arrangement, and as I began to think it over, it seemed after all to have some reason in it; for the Governor could not be sure who I was till he had heard more; and then I put down Shah Mahamad's overbearing manner to the natural hoggish-

ness of character of the Afghans, whose bovine intellects always induce them to be rude when in the exercise of brief authority.

He, however, nearly set me off again, by wishing to come and talk at once. I thought I had given way quite enough, and so I said to him firmly, "Now you may go; when I am ready to talk I will send for you." I then went to sleep, but before morning Shah Mahamad came into my tent uninvited, and seeing it was useless to delay him further, I said, "Now, what do you wish to know?" He replied in a very sulky manner, "The Moostoufee wishes to know who you are, where you came from, and where you are going to." To this I answered in a most affable tone, "All this I told the Moostoufee in my letter; but perhaps the scribe did not make it clear, therefore I may repeat to you that I am an English officer travelling for my own pleasure, and having come from Birjund I now wish to go to Herat, and for this reason I asked your master to give me a lodging for a few days;" and then assuming a jocular air, I added, "I assure you I have no intentions against Herat, that you can see for yourself. I have no soldiers with me, and this rifle is my only firearm." "But," said Shah Mahamad, "how did you get across the Zeerkoh tract by yourself." "I was not exactly by myself; I had four troopers that the Amir Mahamad Alam gave me, and who are going back from here." "Yes, I see them, but who ever heard of five men riding alone across a tract like that, with a Toorkmun in every bush." "Nevertheless, my friend, you see we have done it in perfect safety." Still he did not half like it; I think he fancied I might have more men within call, so to smooth matters, I said, "I daresay you are a little astonished at my turning up so suddenly;

but you know you have no posts in your country, and it was, you will allow, quite impossible for me to send a messenger on ahead, and I did send a letter on the instant I arrived here. Besides, if I had any other men with me, or was other than what I say I am, a simple traveller, of course you would have heard of my coming, as it would have been necessary to give the Governor time to send out a suitable 'istakbal' to meet me."

Convinced at last, he then got up, and calling for his horse, prepared to return. Before going, he brought up a very "black-avised" looking individual, called Mahamad Alam, who had ridden in with him, and said, "This is Mahamad Alam, and I am going to leave him with you as Mehmindar till I come back; and mind you (turning to him) do whatever the gentleman wants; and you too," turning to the headman of the village. By their heads and by their eyes they swore that no service possible should be wanting to me, and then Shah Mahamad mounted and galloped off in the direction of Herat, leaving me to my own thoughts.

At first I was very much inclined to be in the blues about it all, but being of a buoyant nature I soon recovered, and conversations with Mahamad Alam, who was extremely civil, tended also to re-assure me. It was a nuisance kicking one's heels in an infernal hole like this, certainly, but then one should not expect western politeness from such hogs as the Afghans. I therefore did my best to wile away the time, sketching the people and talking to them. In the evening I went up to the inevitable shrine, which one always sees close to every Afghan village, and which was situated on a little hillock to the north.

One of the things that are instantly apparent on coming among Afghans is the slovenliness of their

attire, so different from the smart Persians. Of course I do not mean for an instant to assert that compared with a European a Persian is either smart or clean, but with an Owghan he certainly is. An Afghan has a turban of unknown length, but very evident untidiness; a Persian has generally a smart looking hat or cap of some kind. An Afghan is always either to be seen in very loose dirty-white shirt and drawers, with a shapeless garment, called a choga, thrown over all; but a Persian always has more or less regard for appearances, and it is a very rare thing indeed to see one in his shirt and drawers; he always puts over them the neat well-fitting "kaba," * of some smart colour, as light blue, red, &c., and if he is accustomed to the higher walks of life, he also wears, over all, a dark coat, with plaited skirt.

Another respect in which the Owghan differs from the Persian is in his propensity for turning himself into a small arsenal. This custom is, I think, to be regretted, because there is no doubt that much of the turbulence of character of the Owghans is owing to their always having deadly arms handy to use when their tempers, or the devil, gets the better of them. Thus, while every Owghan strongly reminds you of the first villain in a Surrey-side melo-drama, most Persians have more or less the appearance of gentlemen.

In the afternoon, a man named Peer Mahamad came to say he had been sent to look after me by the Moostoufee, and I was quite touched by the compliment, and inclined to argue well from it. I became confirmed in this opinion on talking with him, and when I purposed to move on that night, he not only made no objection but seemed to consider it advisable.

* A close long gown worn by men.

Events, however, proved that this gentleman was only a spy sent to see what I was doing. He was one of the race which some people have fondly considered to be descended from the soldiers of Alexander, called Seeah Posh amongst themselves, Kafirs by their Muhumudan neighbours and enemies.* This individual certainly did not look much like a descendant of any conqueror, and the colour of his skin pointed rather to an eastern than a western origin. I talked with him for some time, he seemed a nice enough quiet sort of man, with rather a funk of the Owghans. The Amir's best general, Faramosh Khan, was of this race, and seemed to have been a very fine fellow; those well up in Afghan history will remember he was treacherously shot by the rival faction. Peer Mahamad was pleased to remark that Faramosh Khan was much of the same personal appearance as mine, therefore, as the sun had by this time touched me up pretty freely, he must have been of a fine magenta tint.

Before, however, determining on starting, I talked it all over again with Peer Mahamad and Noor Mahamad, and we mutually agreed that it would be best to start early in the morning, and, making a short march, wait at some nearer village for an answer, so that no time should be unnecessarily lost.

I left Pahre about daybreak on the 21st, and marched at first over a waste of undulating stony ground; but this was soon replaced by evidences of cultivation, and I was actually in the Herat valley. The first village I came to was a very large one, with an immense number of gardens and a great deal of water; I however went on to a small village called Kargan, about five miles

* The inhabitants of a country on the east of Afghanistan called Kafiristan.

from Herat. This village has the usual fort which is necessary to the existence of an Owghan, and from one of the towers I had a very fine view of the valley, which stretched in every direction but the south, one sea of yellow fields and verdant trees. Without going farther, it was easy to see the value of Herat to any power with intentions on India, and to recognize the justness of the dictum which termed it the Gate of India. Just as in the minor undertaking of the capture of a city the wise commander will give his troops a breathe on their gaining the outer defences, so must every force coming from the west rest his men awhile in this valley. And no better place could he found for the purpose—abundance of beautiful water, quantities of wheat and barley and rice, endless herds of cattle and sheep, good forage, and a fine climate, all combine to make the Herat valley the most apt place for a halt before entering the desolate country between Furrah and Kandahar.

I waited here in a cool garden near the fort till the answer should come from the Moostoufee. They brought me bunches of the first grapes of the season, and as I ate I already began to feel the charm of the rest I was so much in need of, and which I did not doubt for one instant I should soon enjoy in Herat.

And I cannot even now, after the events have proved the fallacy of such a view, reproach myself for the good opinion I was inclined to hold of Owghan hospitality. It is true I had had considerable experience of the breed in every variety of shape; I knew them to be liars, treacherous beyond all the races of the earth, vain boasters, and utterly untrustworthy in every way; but I thought over all our Government had done for them, and then contrasting it with the little I required from them, I could not bring myself to fear an unfavourable

answer to my request for permission to rest a few days in Herat. It is true that the emissary of the Moostoufee had been most insolent to me; but I was so much inclined to believe all the good of them I could, that I put this down more to the innate rudeness of the Afghan character, and the lowness of the origin of Shah Mahamad himself.

Therefore, when that individual swaggered into the garden where I was sitting, followed by five or six slovenly swashbucklers with loaded rifles, I felt inclined to banter him, and say that I was glad he had brought me my release, as I was tired of kicking my heels, and longed to get into Herat and pay my respects to the Moostoufee. I, however, restrained myself; a faint suggestion of canniness came to my rescue, and I held my tongue. Lucky was it I did so, for in one moment all my hopes of even ordinary civility were shattered.

Swaggering up to where I was sitting, he sat himself down on my carpet without asking the usual permission required by politeness, and with his shoes on. Both these were most serious breaches of civility, and at another time I should have been inclined to resent them; but I felt this was a time when I should require all the command of my temper, and I said nothing but, "Well, have you brought an answer from the Moostoufee?" Without replying to me, he began by saying, in his usual loud tone, "Why did you leave your 'manzil?' you had no orders to do so. You have done wrong." The man's manner was so insolent that I could not bring myself to seem to excuse myself by saying, as I had every right to do, that I did so with the express acquiescence of the Mehmindar he had left with me; but said instead, "I do not require any opinion from you as to my conduct, but if you have any message or

letter from the Moostoufee, I request you will give it to me." There was now a crowd of villagers round; but, not in the least restrained by the publicity of the scene, he replied in a loud blustering voice, "Yes, I have orders. You are to go away from this at once. Sowars will be sent with you and see you beyond the frontier at Kohsan, and then we shall be free of you." Then, turning to one of his people, he said, "Here, order them to get the mules ready at once."

Feeling I could not stand his impertinence any longer, and anxious above everything to avoid any cause for misunderstanding between our Governments, I got up and ordered the loads to be put on and my horse to be got ready. While the loads were being put on, I asked Shah Mahamad three questions, in order to satisfy myself there was no mistake, as, to tell the truth, I was quite unprepared for any such ending to the affair:—"1st, Did you tell the Moostoufee exactly what I told you? 2nd, Have you told me exactly the Moostoufee's orders? 3rd, Are you sure there is no mistake, and the Moostoufee is aware I am an English officer?" To all these he replied in the affirmative, but as I could not understand it I said, "I cannot believe it, and will therefore write him a letter and ask if it is the case."

I was not well at the time. I had had some very long hard marches, and would not have gone further that day, but, thinking that if I refused to go he might attempt violence, I started as soon as I could, anxious now only to get out of a country where I had been so badly received.

When I moved off, I was surrounded on all sides by sowars with guns, and it was evident that the villagers regarded me as a prisoner, in fact I heard one of them ask the question. After we had marched about two

hours, and had arrived at the village of Deh-i-Minar, the individual in charge, Mahamad Alam, said, "We are going to halt here." I replied, "But I wish to go on to Zandehjan, and thence by forced marches, in order to get away from you people." But he would pay no attention whatever to my wishes, and then he stood looking on at me pitching my own tent, with a mixture of insolence and amusement in his face.

In the course of the day I wanted to purchase some supplies from the villagers, but my boy could get nothing; and then Mahamad Alam came to say I was the guest of the Moostoufee, and, if I required anything, I had only to ask him, and he would provide it. As I saw that by this means, that is if I accepted, he would gain two points, viz., deprive me or my servants of any communication with the people, and provide himself with a sort of tacit acknowledgment that I had, in taking supplies from the Moostoufee, condoned his incivility, I said to him, "Very good, if you will not permit the villagers to sell me anything, I shall go without, for after the way I have been treated, I tell you plainly I will not touch a thing belonging to the Moostoufee." He tried very hard to shake my resolution, and I afterwards found out he had a personal reason for doing so. The Moostoufee had furnished him with money for *my* expenses, and if I could only be induced to take something—the less the better—he would be enabled to make up a bill which would put a considerable sum in his pockets; but, if I refused, it could not fail to be known to every one—indeed I took care to refuse in a loud tone, so that every one could hear—and he would have no excuse for sending in any bill at all.

In fact, he proved in every way a worthy successor to Shah Mahamad. I need not trouble the reader with

a recapitulation of the hundred ways in which he strove to show the smouldering hatred of his race to mine, and to goad me into some act which might furnish him with an excuse, perhaps, to murder me. I never once gave in to him, but I told him home truths in a calm polite yet perfectly fearless manner. I felt I was now in a position that any European travelling among such people, especially Afghans, might at any moment find himself, a position of great danger, from which I had to extricate myself, so that no stain should rest on the name of my people.

Luckily I brought to the contest some knowledge of Asiatics in general, and Afghans in particular. Once before in Bhotan, when all alone, forty miles beyond our troops, a Bhotan took on himself to insult me, and I took on myself to knock him down, with most happy effect. I knew it would not do to repeat such an experiment here, for an Afghan is quick with his knife, and has none of the chivalrous feeling that would stay his hand in attacking a defenceless foe; but the principle was the same, and I felt it would not do now to give in to him: So, when he practised his petty insults, I pretended not to notice them, but smiled and thanked him for giving me such an insight into the character of his nation. I said, "I have always heard Afghans had no manners, now I am sure of it;" and I added, "In the west, our customs differ much from yours. Here it seems to be the fashion to take delight in insulting strangers, while we always strive to be polite to them." When he refused to permit my servant to purchase rice, I said, "No matter, I am a soldier and can do without. Don't, pray, imagine I am put to any inconvenience." "No, I know you are not," he replied angrily; "you do not seem to care for anything."

"Thank you for the compliment; with you Afghans, I suppose it would be different, being only quarter civilized you of course are not so able to control your feelings or your wants." So it went on hour by hour, till I got quite accustomed to his annoyances, and he, seeing that I did so, gradually left them off.

In the evening I asked him to send me a scribe to write a letter for me. "What do you want to write?" "I wish to write to the Moostoufee, whom I still believe to be a gentleman, to inform him of the mistake he has made in sending a low-bred man like yourself with me." "There are no scribes here." "Then, doubtless, you would not mind writing the letter for me yourself?" "I cannot write." "What, are you so ill-educated as that? (with a shrug)—then I will try and write myself; so, if you will now leave me, I will do so."

I then wrote the following letter to the Moostoufee, which, with the aid of my vocabulary, I put into the best Persian I could. The result was, I dare say, not very satisfactory, but I am sure it was perfectly intelligible.

"Moostoufee Sahib,

"I wrote to you from Pahre, the day before yesterday, that I had been travelling in Khorassan, and wished to stop a few days at Herat on my way to Mushudd. My reason for wishing to do so was because I myself and my servants were quite knocked up with the long marches we had to make to get through the dangerous country of Zeerkoh safely, because I wished to lay in supplies of food and get my things repaired, and because I was in want of ready-money, which I hoped to get for bills on India. For these reasons I

made the request that you would kindly appoint a 'manzil' for me, and I never had the slightest doubt that you, a confidential servant of the Amir, knowing so well how much the English Government have done for your king, would without hesitation receive me with respect and kindness, at least equal to that I have received in Persia at the hands of every official, from Bushuhr to Birjund. I am sorry that, owing to the necessity of keeping my movements a secret from any Toorkmun spy or robber who might be about, I was unable to send this letter on till my arrival at Pahre, but the instant I arrived there it was despatched.

"I regret to have to inform you that all my hopes of the honourable treatment due to a stranger, of a nation who is notoriously so friendly to your Government, are at an end; and, as it is stated that the treatment I have received has been by your orders, I take the first opportunity of letting you know the exact state of the case, and of assuring you I cannot believe that you can be aware of the manner in which I have been treated.

"Believing that sufficient time would have elapsed for you to make the necessary arrangements, I started after midnight, on the 21st, meaning to send on my tent and uniform to the Pul-i-Malan, in order to be able to change my travelling suit and enter Herat in uniform, in a manner which befitted the friendly reception I believed awaited me. I had, however, hardly started when several sowars galloped up, and one of them called out, in a loud tone, 'Where is the Sahib?' I replied, 'I am the Sahib.' The same individual then said, in a most insolent manner, 'What do you mean by leaving your 'manzil' without orders? Go back at once.' I replied, I did not know who he was, nor by what right he spoke to me in this manner, but that if he brought

any answer from you I requested he would give it me. He then got off his horse and gave me a letter, which I asked him to read. This letter purported to be a reply to mine, and asked me some questions as to my identity. I then said, the best way to answer any questions would clearly be to go in person to you; and, as I had already started, it would be simpler to continue my march. But to this the man above mentioned, called, I am told, Shah Mahamad, said, 'You are not to go on. You must come back; I must find out who you are, and what you want here.' I replied I was a traveller, as I had informed the Moostoufee, and that if he wished any more information I would be very glad to give it; and that the best way would be for me to go on and see him, especially as all my things had started. He said, 'It does not matter, you must come back.' I replied, 'It is a very extraordinary reception, and quite contrary to anything I have seen anywhere else.' He replied, 'It is the custom in Afghanistan, and in England also. Don't tell me, I know all about English rules.' Seeing, then, that arguing further with him would only expose me to more of his impertinence, I said, 'Very well, I will go back,' and I returned to the place I had occupied.

"Shah Mahamad, at first, pestered me in a very overbearing manner to talk with him at once; but, as I had had no sleep that night, or for three nights before, I asked him to wait till I had slept. After a few hours he came, and, without being announced, rudely opened my tent, entered and sat down with his shoes on on my carpet, though I was only half awake. Though much annoyed at his persistent impertinence, I kept my temper, and asked him what he wished to know. He said, 'The Moostoufee wants to know who you are, where you

have come from, what you want here, and where you are going to.' To all these questions I replied, saying, 'I am an English Colonel, my name is MacGregor; I have been travelling in Khorassan; I am not on any duty, but am a simple traveller.' After cross-questioning me, and casting doubt on my statements, he at last left, saying he would tell the Moostoufee, and I would see what orders he gave.

"In the evening a man named Peer Mahamad came to say the Moostoufee had sent him, thinking I had probably started, to see that I was put to no trouble, and that I got proper shade and attention at my breakfast place.

"I then talked it over with Peer Mahamad and Mahamad Alam, and we agreed that it would be best for me to make a short march next day, and wait for your answer, so that no time should be lost. Accordingly, this morning I started and went to Tizan, and then to Kurgan, and there waited for your reply. After the sun had begun to get hot, Shah Mahamad appeared with five or six men, armed with guns, and swaggering up to me, sat himself on my carpet, without my permission, and with his shoes on. He began by saying, 'Why did you leave your manzil? You had no orders to. You have done wrong.' I replied, 'I do not want to hear your opinions; if you have any message or letter from the Moostoufee I should like to hear it.' There was now a crowd of villagers, &c., round, but he was not in the least restrained by the publicity of the scene, and said, in a loud blustering tone, 'Yes, I have orders; you are to go away from this at once. I will send sowars with you, and they will see you beyond the frontier at Kohsan; then we shall be free of you;' and then, turning to one of his attendants, said—'Here, order them to get

the mules ready at once.' Feeling I could not stand his impertinence any longer, and anxious above everything to avoid any cause for misunderstanding between our Governments, I got up and ordered the loads to be put up, and my horse to be got ready. If, therefore, it was your wishes that I shall not visit Herat, you will see in what an insolent manner they have been carried out, and I trust you will see the propriety of apologizing for the conduct of your servants. After this, Shah Mahamad turned to Mahamad Alam, and gave him orders, in an audible tone, saying—'You will go with the Sahib with these sowars, and take him to Kohsan, as fast as you can, going ten Kos every day, and then return.' He then added something in a whisper, which I did not hear.

"While the loads were being got ready, I asked Shah Mahamad three questions. First, 'Did you tell the Moostoufee exactly what I have said?' Second, 'Did he tell you to say exactly what you said?' And, third, 'Are you quite sure the Moostoufee is aware I am an English officer?' To all these he answered in the affirmative. I replied, 'I cannot believe it, and therefore will write him a letter, and ask if what you say is true.'

"All this time I was standing in the sun, which I felt very much, having a strong fever on me at the time. In fact so ill did I feel, that if I could have helped it, I would not have marched that day or the next; but I thought that if I refused, he might attempt violence, and then there might be bloodshed—for that I was not prepared to put up with.

"At last, about ten, I started, being evidently regarded by all as a prisoner, as I was surrounded by sowars with loaded rifles, who marched two in front, one on each side, and two in rear. After we had been marching for

about two hours, Mahamad Alam suddenly stopped and said—'This is your manzil;' thus confirming me in the belief that I am a prisoner; by whose orders I cannot conceive. I therefore, at once, write all this to you, and hope that, though my knowledge of Persian is limited, I shall have made myself quite understood.

"Although I cannot believe that you are any party to the above disgraceful treatment of me, I must respectfully request that you will, for the information of my Government, send me a reply, by return sowar, to the following questions:—

"'Were you quite aware that I am English, and hold the rank of colonel in Her Majesty's army? Did you knowingly send messages to me, through a menial servant? Did you in any way direct or encourage him to behave to me in the outrageously insolent manner he has? Am I to be regarded as a prisoner?'

"In conclusion, I may inform you I came to Herat with as friendly feelings to the Afghans as it was possible to have, hoping and believing they would be fully reciprocated.

"If a satisfactory explanation and suitable reparation is offered regarding these facts, I shall be most happy to say no more about the matter; but, failing this and feeling I am absolutely blameless, I must report the whole matter to my Government, in order that some explanation may be arrived at."

The difficulty now was to get a messenger to carry this. Of course I could not trust Mahamad Alam. Yet it would be difficult to throw him off the scent, as he knew I was writing a letter. I therefore wrote two copies; one I gave him, and asked him to send it; the other I kept by me till a favourable opportunity offered

to give it to a trusty messenger, in the shape of the owner of the garden, who had been so civil to me in the morning, and who had followed me up to this. Of course Mahamad Alam immediately tore up the one I gave him; but I have every reason to believe the other reached its destination, as on arrival at Ghorian, I heard orders had been sent to be more careful in their treatment of me.

Next day we left Deh-i-Minar, and marched down the south of the valley, keeping close under the hills. The road crossed over a spur of the Dashakh range, which runs out to the north, nearly up to the river, and then went over a waste of good but uncultivated soil to Zundehjan. About three miles from this place, we passed the large village of Bernabud. Zundehjan is one of the largest places I have seen since leaving Bushuhr. It has about 2,000 or 2,500 houses in all, and must be regarded more as a parish than a town, for its houses, villages, and hamlets are scattered about over a large area of country, each subdivision with its own fort and separated by extensive and well cultivated fields and gardens, a brigade.

During the march Mahamad Alam tried to ride alongside of me, and after trying in vain to get rid of him by hints which any man of sense would have understood, I was obliged to administer the snub direct to him. "I wish you would leave me alone, I never care to ride with people I dislike." So he went, scowling at me. We arrived at Zundehjan, and directly the people came crowding round me in a most enthusiastic way, saying how glad they were to see an Englishman again; would I not stop and have a smoke, or some grapes, or stay altogether. I was obliged to refuse their kind offer, saying, I was going on at once, but I was delighted with

their reception, and showed by my manner how much I appreciated it. One man amused me immensely, he first said that they all considered it a disgrace that I was being treated in this way, and that if I wished they would set upon Mahamad Alam and his sowars and give them a good thrashing and escort me to Kareez or Mushudd, or anywhere I wished themselves. This offer of service I was obliged however to decline, because, however much I should have liked to have these individuals punished, it would not quite have accorded with my resolve to remain perfectly passive under the dose of Owghan hospitality I was receiving.

Mahamad Alam kept looking round and scowling at me in a way which, though it boded no good, only made me laugh. When we got to the far side of the village I was led to a garden by a fine old fellow, a Syud, who said he had known Todd Sahib, and going in was seated on a carpet in the shade by a stream of cool-gushing water, while my host ran off to pick me some grapes. I soon forgot all the annoyances of my friend Mahamad Alam, and was beginning to indulge in a dream about the future of this glorious valley—was it to be English or Russian—when I looked up and saw his long dark features watching me with an air of mock humility as if waiting my permission to sit down. "Oh, really, this is too bad," I exclaimed, "can't you leave me alone for a moment. I was just beginning to feel happy at getting rid of you for an hour or so, when I find you here. Now, do go, like a good man; you see I don't like you." He seemed half inclined to swagger and refuse to go, but the Syud came up and with dulcet words induced him to leave me in peace.

Then we sat down and I had breakfast, of which I invited the Syud to partake, which he, nothing loath,

soon did, approving highly of Pascal's grills, and complimented me on my cook. This absence of all prejudice in eating with one, strikes one who has been in India as very pleasant. In Persia, and I imagine in most other parts of Central Asia, the people never show any disinclination to eat with Europeans; but in India, the most miserable Mahomedan in the country would refuse, with sovereign scorn, to touch anything which had even been handled by the highest Englishman in the land (unless no one was looking); thus showing, not what good followers of Mahomed they are, but how closely allied to Hindooism has the religion of the faithful there become.

I had a long and very pleasant talk with the Syud, who was a man of the world, and having travelled, had his rough edges rubbed off, and was able to see there might be some good in an infidel after all. In fact, he was pleased to place us almost in the same category as the Sooneees, any how, far above such utterly damned wretches as Sheeas, Ooroos, and Hindoos. Of course the news of my arrival having reached the village, crowds came to the door of the garden to see me, and many pressed for admittance, a boon which the old Syud would by no means grant without my permission. Generally I refused, as I really wanted to be quiet; but some few of the better class of villagers I saw and spoke to, and I was much pleased by the simple, unaffected pleasure with which they came forward and took my hand, which I always made a point of giving them. Once I was asked why I gave my right hand on meeting people, and for want of a better answer, I said, that we meant the holding out our right hands, as a token that our hearts were as open and free of guile as our hands were void of weapons of offence, an explana-

tion and sentiment which, I remember, at the time was much applauded.

Among those who managed to get in to see me was a very handsome old lady, who came in tremblingly, leading her blind son, a boy of about seventeen or eighteen. I was much struck with her appearance, which, as she did not veil, when she came up to me, I had every opportunity of examining. She was a tall spare woman, with perfectly white hair, black brilliant eyes with an immense amount of expression, now flashing up with anger, now scintillating with humour, and anon assuming a gentle, entreating look. Her nose was aquiline, and she had beautiful regular features and pearly white teeth, rather full lips, and a determined massive chin. Altogether she was a woman it was better to be friends with, than the foe of.

This was unfortunate, for she had come to ask me an impossibility; nothing less than to restore her son to sight. I looked at him, and he seemed to be stone blind of one eye, and it had been caused, she said, by a stone. I was therefore obliged to tell her it was not the slightest use my trying to cure him. The greatest physician in the world could do nothing for him. She first bantered me, and said, "What, you who can do such wonderful things, make telescopes by which you can see what they are doing at the present moment in Herat, not able to make my poor boy see!" Then she got angry, and said I could if I would, but that I wouldn't help one of the faithful. To this I replied, "Ah, you wrong us there. If you could take your boy to some doctor in India, you would see that we in our hospitals treat all alike—Mahomedans, Christians and Hindoos." Then she begged my pardon, and, throwing herself at my feet,

entreated me for God's sake, in the name of the prophet, of Isa, the spirit of God, by the eyes of my child, and the memory of my mother, to help her. "Ah, Agha, give my child sight, and he shall be your slave, and you may burn me." "Tauba, tauba,"* cried the Syud, who was intensely shocked at this proposal; "go lady, the Sahib cannot help you." Then this wonderful old lady again changed her mobile features, and half smiling, half crying said, "Forgive me, Agha, I know no one but God can do anything for him, but I could not rest till I saw you." "I am very sorry, Khanum,† I would willingly do anything for you I could, but you have seen enough of life to know we must bow to God's will." So after all we parted friends. This habit of orientals of imagining every Furrungee is a Doctor, and can cure anything, seems to us at first a strange one, but a little consideration explains it. It is but human nature; a man is labouring under a hopeless disease, which has caused him years of agony, he hears a Furrungee has come to his village; what more natural than for him to rush off and think that he will get sight restored to his blind eye, or have a new nose put on! "Did not a Furungee forty years ago, restore the use of her arm to Agha Mahamad's wife's sister?" And his importunity is merely the clutching at the last straw; to refusals he tries to apply the comforting belief that perhaps the Furrungee may relent, he is not well, or is in a bad humour, or the stars are not favourable to-day, but to-morrow, or the next, he may do it. They never seem to doubt that you *can* do it, and will follow you for days in the hope that you will accede to their request at last.

The people and the Syud pressed me much to stay

* For shame. † Lady, madam.

the day, but I told them plainly that I could not. I should have liked to have done so, but the incivility with which I had been received made me anxious to get away. I asked, therefore, one of them to order my mules to be got ready. Presently he came back looking much frightened, and said the Sirdar had ordered that I was not to go on that day. I replied that I meant to go on, but each time I sent I got the same answer, and each time the wording of it became more insolent, and at last I was told that Mahamad Alam had sent all my mules into the fort to be sure I could not get them.

I thought it was now time to see who was master, so mounting my horse, and bidding my boy come with me on the spare one, I rode up to where Mahamad Alam was sitting. "I want to know," I said, "why you have ordered my mules into the fort." "Because," said he, "*I* am not going further to-day," and he gave his turban a shove and leered at me. "Of course, you may stay if you please, but I want to go on to Ghorian to-day." "No, no, we will not go on, *I* am tired and *you* are tired." I then tried all the arguments I could, but he would not listen, and seeing it was of no use, and only caused loss of dignity to argue with a hog like him, I said, "Very well, you may keep my things, but I am going on." "No you are not," he exclaimed, jumping up, and, running to my horse's head, stood right in my way. With a tremendous effort I controlled myself. All my Highland blood was boiling, and I longed to jump off my horse and strike him in the face, that he might prove his manhood. I had no fear of the result, for I felt sure I had friends among the villagers; but one cannot think of oneself alone. Were I killed, or even wounded, in however just a cause, it might occasion some embarrassment to Government, so I shut my

eyes for a moment to keep out the insolent visage of my tormentor, and then said quite calmly, "Mahamad Alam, I am determined to go on, unless you are resolved to use violence to prevent me, so either say before all these people you will use force, or move out of my way." Cowed, like a whipped cur, he moved aside as I rode on; but turning round I said, "As for my things they are in your keeping, you are responsible for them—come on Pascal;" and so I went on my way, a solitary Englishman. "Don't go without a guard," cried out the Syud, "Toorkmuns are always prowling about in the river bed." "If any one likes to come with me," I replied, "I shall be glad of his escort and will reward him, but better to be a Toorkmun's prisoner than the Moostoufee's friend."

The fact was, I knew my man. He was only a miserable bully, and I felt sure he would not be long after me. I knew that the Moostoufee had refused to let me enter Herat, but I believed he had also ordered me to be treated with every respect, and that I was really indebted to my low-bred conductor for all the insolence I received, and I thought he would not dare let me risk the road alone.

And so it proved. Before I had gone two miles my friend came galloping up with his own sowars and some others from the village; but I took no notice of him whatever, and did not deign to ask whether my things were coming or not, but being pretty sure of the road I rode silently on.

Just as it was getting dark I arrived at Ghorian, and keeping along a fine canal of water we got to the fort. Here I was very civilly treated by Mahamad Sarwar, the governor, who showed me rooms, and on my declining to use them that night on account of the

heat, he busied himself very kindly in getting a carpet spread for me, on the border of a nice tank of water. On this I lay down, and was very soon asleep, taking the rest of a soldier, with my revolver tied to my wrist. The fact was, I was very suspicious; my treatment had been shameful, and I knew enough of the variable, treacherous nature of the Afghans, to feel what probability there was of my being murdered. So, though I was dead beat with the heat, the fatigue and the anxieties of the last few days, I still kept in my power the wherewithal to stamp my mark on any treacherous assassin.

Early next morning, the 23rd, I was ready for a start, and sent to the Governor to say I wished to be off at once. Presently Mahamad Alam appeared, and I at once noticed his manner was changed, and this I afterwards heard was owing to an order which had been sent express from Herat, warning him to be more careful in his treatment of me. Instead of coming up to me in his usual offensive manner, and sitting down unceremoniously and without my permission, as he now approached, there was a deprecatory shake in his very gait, and when he got close up, he stood in an attitude of abject humility. First, he ventured to ask if my highness's health was good, and to hope I had enjoyed a good night's rest. Then with a perfectly assumed air of abjectness, which would have made his fortune on the boards, he deprecated my anger, and requested forgiveness and his life if he spoke. He broke the intelligence that, owing to nearly all of my highness's mules having dropped their shoes, my highness's muleteers ventured to hope I would wait till they were shod. His behaviour was very amusing, and it brought out another phase of the Afghan character. Before, no insolence was

too great, when he thought he could indulge in it with impunity, now no cringing could be too abject; but he disgusted me, and so I told him. I said, "For God's sake, Mahamad Alam, go away from me. Before, annoying as your insolence was, there was something not absolutely sickening in your behaviour, but now you make me ill." I was in truth rather glad of the halt. I was far from well, the constant exposure to the sun had brought on a fever, and the anxieties of the last few days had added to it so much that I could eat nothing, and sat my horse with difficulty.

In the evening I went round and had a look at the fort. This is about 400 yards square, with the usual bastions at the corners and round towers in the curtain. The walls are thirty feet high, and three feet thick at top, and there is a ditch all round. There is only one gateway, which is very well protected by traverses and commanded from the walls and towers, so that blowing it in would be a dangerous undertaking. All round there is a ditch thirty feet broad and twelve feet deep, and it can when necessary be filled with water. The fort is not commanded, but is surrounded in every direction by cover close up to the walls, and although there is a parapet on the top of the walls, it is too low to give cover to men standing or even kneeling, while there is not room for men to lie down and fire. This could of course be rectified, but at present, it is a fact, that except from the gateway and towers no fire could be delivered from the fort without exposing the men to an enemy who would be well under cover. There is another species of defence here, which I had read of, but never seen before, called "sheerazee." This, which is simply a *fausse-braye*, consists of a covered way all round the fort outside, between the foot of the wall and

the escarp of the ditch, consisting of a bank and parapet, meant to enable the garrison to give a double fire on any side. This plan, however, falls short of excellence in one or two important respects; the whole line could be enfiladed, and secondly, there being only one narrow entrance to the fort, if an enemy made good his assault on one part, he could take all the defenders in flank, and either prevent their re-entering the fort or get in with them himself. These and other points I pointed out to the men with me, as I knew every word I said would be reported, and I thought that thus casting my bread on the waters, might not be altogether unavailing. One man asked me what I would do if I was attacking it, and I told him; winding up with, "and I should expect to be inside in two hours." "True," said one man, "no doubt you would, but the fact is, we do not care much for forts, the real strength of the Owghan lies in his sword." "Indeed," said I, knowing I was in for a dose of Owghan boasting; "but you know if the Russians come, they are not to be beaten in that way." "The Russians," said my friend. "have not yet fought the Owghans, and they must not think because they have beaten the Turanis, they can thrash us. On the contrary, directly they come, we will go out in the open (pointing towards the wide plain to the north) and drawing our swords (this with a sweep of the hand worthy of a life-guardsman), we would cry 'Allah, Akbar,' and cut them up in no time." "Have you ever seen 'grape'" said I, quietly. "Grape," he replied, staggered; "yes, I know what grape is No doubt, it is a very difficult thing;" but, recovering his equanimity, "nothing can stop the charge of an Owghan." Wait till you try it, I thought; but my friend added, "Besides, we would send all our flocks and herds ahead

of us, and when they had drawn the fire, we would be into them!" Such quaint fancies of war have these untutored ruffians! Ghorian was taken from the Owghans, despite their swords, by the Persians in 1837 and in 1857, and held on the last occasion; the defence made on both occasions being of that nature that the least said the better. However, it was the scene of one extremely gallant defence, equalling what I have always considered as one of the most splendid feats in history, the defence of the gate at Magdala by Theodore and twenty men against a British brigade.

Mahamad Sarwar Khan, the governor of Ghorian, was a Ghilzye, and he was very civil to me. He expresssed his great regret that I had been so badly treated, and hoped that, if anything he could do would make me forget it, I was to order him. I replied that, as for remembering it, there were only two people I had to thank, and those were the Moostoufee and his minion, Mahamad Alam, and I should not think of condemning all Afghans because two of them had proved discourteous; therefore, I should be very happy to accept *his* hospitality; but that what I really wanted was to be left alone, as I was not well.

All that day, then, I lay tossing on my bed in a high fever. I took great doses of quinine, and as a consequence got into a half-drowsy state, and dreamt all manner of horrible dreams; but next morning, though very weak, my mind had recovered its natural buoyancy, and I determined to get off.

Mahamad Sarwar, on my summons, turned out in an uncommonly smart manner, and we were very soon on the road. He said that he had reports that bands of Tekke Toorkmuns were prowling about, and as he had orders to take the very greatest care of me, he had

turned out all the mounted men he could muster, viz., about 200. In appearance they were more like Persians than Afghans, for none of them wore turbans, but instead the lamb's-wool "koolla," which, I believe, Shere Alee introduced. They were well mounted, armed, and accoutred, and were altogether a very serviceable, if not very strong, body of light horse.

On starting we went along anyhow, till in about four miles we got to Zungee Sowar, a village on the left bank of the Hurree Rood. Here Mahamad Sarwar sent out a party to scour the thick scrub jungle with which the whole bed is almost covered, and when they had got on to our flank we crossed the river. The Hurree Rood—the first river I had seen since passing the Khona Kurgan—was here not more than seventy feet wide and about nine inches deep, with a very gentle current.

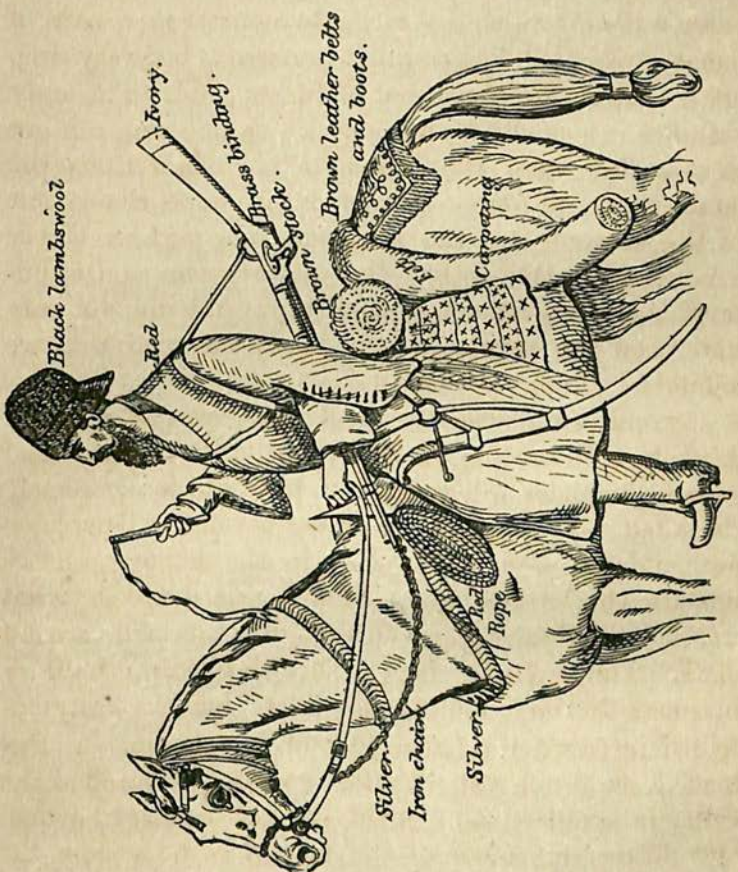
Immediately after crossing, we got into a tract of jungle which stretches the whole way up to Surrukhs, and Mahamad Oorum told me the Toorkmuns often hid in it, and then pounced out on and carried off any unwary traveller. Certainly the thick tamarisk bushes would have effectually hidden any amount of cavalry. He also said that lower down the river beyond Kohsan there were tigers to be found in the bed, but that no one ever attempted to shoot them on account of the danger from Toorkmuns.

Continuing over open undulating ground, at about the eleventh mile we came to the queer-looking, but exceedingly strong, little village of Shubbush. It is built on a small hillock, on which all the knowledge and all the resources of the village Vaubans have evidently been expended; and not in vain, for, rude though its defences be, it would be a hard nut for any

one to crack. First, the whole hill has been scarped, and a high wall erected on the top. Inside are all the houses, resting against this wall, and three stories in height. Outside, at the foot of the scarp, is a small space all round covered with houses also, the outer walls of which are made to answer as a sort of fausse-braye, and outside all is a narrow but very deep ditch, with a deep bottom of black mud. The only entrance is a small aperture by which one man can get in at a time, after the fashion of our connections the monkeys, on all fours; so that I will hope the people in the sherazee are the least valuable portion of the community. Altogether the place seems quite impregnable to Toorkmun generalship. We did not stay here, and the people had evidently no wish that we should.

Beyond Shubbush the road goes over a waste of gravelly undulations the whole way. Part of the road goes right under a low ridge of hills which completely shuts out all view of the country beyond. This, however, did not seem to awaken in the happy-go-lucky hussars who formed my escort any curiosity to see what was beyond these hills, even though it might be a band of Toorkmuns on the raid. This shocked my military instincts terribly, and as the Khan had carefully instilled into me the great fear of Toorkmuns on this road, I could not rest till I had got on to the top of the ridge in question and could see the country beyond. One hears very often of the matchless horsemen, the born hussars, of the East; but the more one sees of them the clearer becomes the mist of imposture which has hung about them, and it would be nothing short of insult to compare such horsemen to cavalry like the 11th Hussars or Hodson's Horse. They are, however,

for irregular cavalry, very fairly mounted; that is, though none of the horses are very good, all are of a fair working stamp. The horse equipment, too, is of a good, serviceable kind, consisting, as it does, of a light,



workman-like head-stall, a snaffle bridle and knotted rein, and a hair picketing rope attached to an iron peg and with the first yard of it of chain. The saddle is the same as that used by the Toorkmuns, and is a sort

of uncomfortable imitation of a hussar saddle. The tree, indeed, is very like it, and is fastened in the same way. Under this is a thick felt pad, and under again a saddle-cloth also of felt. As a rule, they do not tie anything in front, probably because of the high peak to the pommel, but over the saddle and behind it they seem to carry all that belongs to them. First, they put the horse's "ghool,"* the ends being rolled up from the tail to the saddle, till it forms a long roll over the horse's back, then they put any spare coats or quilts they may have on the saddle, and with a pair of their excellent saddle-bags—"khorzeens"—in which they put all small things, they are complete. Their dress consists, among the Owghans of a loose, dirty choga; and among Persians of a tighter-fitting and more soldierly-looking joba of light blue, red, or purple. Both races on this frontier wear a low busby of sheep-skin, generally black. The Owghans generally have a sword in addition to a long flint or percussion rifle or gun, but the Persians very seldom carry one, and neither carry spears. Under the long dressing-gown-like coat they wear loose drawers, which are generally stuffed into a pair of uncouth but serviceable riding-boots. This, with a short whip in the right hand, completes the equipment of an irregular horseman on the Toorkmun frontier. I do not know whether this description is very intelligible to most of my readers, therefore perhaps the following, which has always seemed to me a capital receipt for making a picture of one of these gentlemen, may help:—Take a bundle of old clothes, tie it on the middle, and about a foot from the top, where stretch an old busby; then divide the lower half into two parts, more or less equal, which separate and

* Saddle-cloth.

place on a horse, so that it seems to be about the middle of the back. Pull out a bit on either side for arms, and hang an old cloak over the whole. Tie all to the saddle, and put the horse into a full gallop, and if in the nodding of the busby, the swaying of the body, and the flapping of the leg and arm pieces, you have not an exact representation of one of these men, you must go elsewhere for your information.

But with all this these poor devils are not bad fellows. They ride very fairly, and keep their horses in good working condition, and if properly treated, and led by one of the young Probyns of India, would no doubt prove useful auxiliaries to our more regular cavalry. They have a very hard time of it. They are expected to be ready at all hours; and this is not a mere *façon de parler*, for those devils of Toorkmuns keep them constantly on the *qui vive*, and they are sometimes out for days together with nothing but what they carry on their horses. During these outings they are liable to be called away literally any distance, up to 100 or 150 miles, and are, of course, exposed to all the risks of a skirmish with the Toorkmuns, and this month after month, year after year. For this work they get 50 krans and 300 maunds of grain per annum, and, therefore, if not the best light horsemen in the world, they certainly are the very cheapest. The worst of it is, they are under such miserable governments, who will not face the scandalous evil of Toorkmun raids, and the consequence is they are outnumbered, and only suffice to make these devils more wary, to turn the current of their raids, not to stop them, and so their work is never-ending.

These particulars were given to me by a very fine young fellow, who came up and made friends with me

on the march. He was a fine dashing horseman, and a scar across his cheek told of his having done good service. He was very communicative, told me all about himself and his family, and when he thought he had got me into a favourable mood he unbosomed himself on a still more tender topic. He said he knew a girl who was as beautiful as the day, with eyes that were now full of fire, and anon sparkled with mirth, or melted in love; her teeth were of a pearl-like whiteness, and when she smiled it was like a sunbeam from heaven, and she was only seventeen. Then she could cook, making the most delicious "nan;"* she could embroider, and lastly, she could ride like a Trojan; was she not a fitting bride for a border rider? I agreed most heartily with him, and recommended him, that having found such a treasure, to lose no time in making her his own. "Ah, yes," he sighed, "I would, but I have not enough money. Agha, if you would buy my horse, and give me a small present, I would be able to manage it." The animal he was riding was a good one, and mine was pretty nearly used up, so I agreed to buy his for 20 tomans, and settle with him on arrival at Kareez, and I gave him 10 krans as a sign of my approval of his matrimonial proposals.

Alas for the deceit of some people, and the simplicity of others! When I got to Kareez, I found the horse was not his to sell, and there was one little impediment to his carrying his beloved to the hymeneal altar, *she was already married.* Thus the young scamp, had nearly made me an innocent party to a theft, and an abduction.

When I sent for him, he excused himself about the horse, with a story which may have been true, that

* Bread.

the owner owed him money, and with regard to the "star of his night," he was equally unabashed. He explained to me that her husband was old, ugly, and a brute (they always are in such cases); that he beat her, and that she was quite anxious to go off with him. He said they had arranged it long ago, and were only waiting for some money to enable him to carry it out. They meant to buy a couple of good "yaboos,"* and placing thereon themselves, their own property, and I daresay as much of the "ugly old brute's" as they could carry, make forced marches into Persian territory, where he would take service.

On the road we met a large party of Huzara Sheeas, who had been on a pilgrimage to Mushudd, and were now returning to their homes beyond Herat. They were very poor, and were evidently in great terror of the Toorkmuns, notwithstanding that they were escorted by a party of matchlockmen from Kohsan. All along to the north of this road, on the crest of a long low ridge, which shuts out the view in this direction, there is a line of look out (karawal) towers, which are supposed to be occupied by the frontier guards, but, of course, never are. If they were occupied, as intended, there is no doubt they would form a very efficient defence, as it would be utterly impossible for the smallest party to get through in the daytime, and even if they slipped through unobserved at night it would be easy to detect the fact in the morning, and, forming some estimate of their numbers, give the alarm.

Among the Sheea pilgrims was a sort of half Balochee, half Hindustani nondescript, who spoke the latter language well. He said that he was a retainer of the Khan of Khelat, and had been to Summarkund

* Ponies.

and Bokhara. I had a short conversation with him, and he seemed rather anxious to evade too close an inquiry into his reasons for travelling, and as I certainly took no interest in them I did not press him.

After a very hot march of about twenty-four miles we got into Kohsan, a very dilapidated looking village, built on a long slope from a low ridge, which runs down to the Hurree Rood. There is nothing very noticeable about it; its houses are of the usual sort, scattered about in little groups amid gardens and fields. The fort is in the last state of dilapidation, so much so, in fact, that it would be much less labour to erect a new one than to attempt its repair. The position of Kohsan is one of considerable importance, as being the first village in the valley of the Hurree Rood which would be reached by forces coming from the west, and the point on which the roads from Toorbut, Mushudd, and Surrukhs join. It is, therefore, a place where there should be a fort of considerable strength, because no invader could venture to pass it by without taking it; and if it were able to offer a respectable resistance, it would necessitate his being detained long among the barren tracts to the west. But with a ruler like Shere Alee, who appropriates the revenue of his country to his own private purposes, what can be expected?

The fort at Kohsan is a crumbling ruin, built on a commanding mound. I entered some quarters they proposed to locate me in, and we passed under a high gateway, and went through a regular tunnel, before we came to the body of the place. Inside, the whole place is in ruins, and as it was very filthy, I was obliged to ask if there was no garden where I could put up. "Of course," said Mahamad Oorum, "there is a most delicious garden, with beautiful shades close by, only I thought you

would prefer the protection of the fort." "Protection," said I, in my blandest tones, for we were by this time great friends, and the memory of Mahamad Alam and Shah Mahamad had faded, "if you will come with me, I shall want no more protection." Then he took me into a most delightful garden, and I bivouacked under the shade of some fine plane trees, by a tank of delicious clear water. After a good bath in the latter, it was a great luxury to lie back on one's bed, in the airiest of costume, and devour, for nothing, bunch after bunch of glorious grapes, that at home would have ruined me.

Kohsan is the frontier town of Afghanistan on this road. To the north there is no other permanent habitation till one comes to Surrukhs. It is a rather wretched looking place, scattered about a good deal, with some fine gardens and vineyards, and a great deal of water. The principal feature, however, seems to be the number of the windmills peculiar to this part of the country. The fort is now, as I have said, but a heap of ruins, but no doubt it could easily be improved, so as to make it worthy of the frontier post of a warlike nation.

After passing a pleasant night, we started early on Thursday the 24th of June, for Kareez, the frontier village of Persia. The road first goes through many walled fields, well irrigated, to the river, Hurree Rood, which it crosses at about the second mile. I was surprised to find the river had here ceased to run, though we had to cross through a pool about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep. The road then goes over stony ground, having the river to the right for a couple of miles, when the latter turns abruptly to the north, and was not again seen by me till I met it at Surrukhs, many days after.

Four miles from the river we came to a mound on

which were the remains of an old fort, which the people called Kafir Kalah, a name which is always given by them to any place for which they do not know any other name. Below these ruins are those of a very fine caravanserai, built on a very elaborate plan, with rooms for travellers, stalls for horses, water tanks and, mirabile dictu! a bath (hammam). The gateway was a very fine specimen of architecture, as indeed was the whole building, though all was now crumbling into ruin.

We got on to the mound, and, while the rear closed up, took a careful survey of the whole country to the north; but not seeing even a speck of dust, Mahamad Oorum said, "You are in luck, for this bit of the road has the worst reputation of any bit between Herat and Mushudd."

We had now crossed the frontier of Afghanistan and Persia, but my escort would not hear of returning till they had seen me safe in Kareez. The remainder of the road to this place is intensely uninteresting, being over a dry, burnt plain, covered with camel thorn. At last, after a hot ride of about eight hours, we arrived.

I now was very glad to be able to say good-bye to Mahamad Alam, who came up with a hang-dog air, and asked me to forgive anything he had done to annoy me, and provide him with a testimonial. I said, "Your daring to ask me for a testimonial is only a fitting ending to your conduct. After insulting me whenever you got a chance, now that I am out of your power you come cringing like a whipped cur. Of course I shall not give you a testimonial, but you may go and tell your master that if he will come and see me in British territory I will do him at least one good turn, and that is to show him how to treat strangers.

You may also say, that although he has refused me entrance to Herat, I will go there some day." This last remark I will explain hereafter.

I may here mention, that after my return to England I was made aware that my proceedings in Afghanistan had been disapproved of in India. It was considered that I had been wrong in going to Herat, in taking a stand on my official character, and in calling on the Moostoufee to explain his proceedings for the information of my Government.

Of course, being a soldier, it is not for me to cavil at these views; but with reference to going to Herat, I have in the foregoing pages attempted to show that the going to Herat arose from a resolution made at a time when it was quite impossible to communicate with my own Government. It was certainly not till I arrived at Birjund that I formed any clear plan, and then I was far away from all possibility of asking the permission of the authorities. No, I am wrong in using the word possibility; it would have been possible for me to wait at Birjund for six months till the leave to enter Afghanistan had reached me; and as this was the only way I could have obtained it, I understand that this was what it is considered I should have done. But in thinking it all over, it seemed to me then intolerable that I should wait so long on the mere chance of gaining this leave, and I was very loath to abandon the scheme altogether and go back; therefore I did what every soldier must always be prepared to do fearlessly, I acted on my own responsibility, and went without leave. As matters turned out, I was pronounced wrong.

With regard to the other indictment in the charges made against me, that I was wrong in taking a stand on my official character, and in calling on the Moos-

toufee to explain proceedings adopted towards me for the information of my Government, but should rather have gone simply as a private individual and traveller, I can only say I *did* go as a private traveller; as such I had travelled across Persia; I made no change whatever in my demeanour. In Persia I had often been asked who I was, and I had always replied, "I am a colonel in the British service, travelling for my own pleasure." At Pahre I was asked the same question in a very insolent manner, and I gave identically the same reply. Thinking it all over,—and since it has been implied that I should not have said so, I have thought it over often enough—I cannot conceive what other answer I could have given. Not being a Persian, or an Afghan, or a Russian, but an English gentleman, I could not tell a lie. I *was* a colonel in the British army, I *was* travelling for pleasure, and I assert that I was bound in honour to say so or not reply at all. I should be loath to imagine that any one would think my reply too full, and that my end might have been equally gained by the introduction of the "suppressio veri" element; but for the sake of argument let me suppose such a crooked answer had been made. If I said, "I am an Englishman travelling for pleasure," I should at once have been convicted of a false suggestion, because all through Persia I had travelled unquestioned as a colonel, and they could have found this out at once from my servants and escort. My conviction was, and is still, that the only course to adopt with crooked minded Asiatics is always everywhere boldly to tell the truth.

The next point is that *I took a stand on my official character.* I reply at once, I made no stand on my official character; in fact, I made no stand at all. On

the contrary, I gave way at once, and on every occasion I acquiesced in the wishes of the Afghan officials. I even put up with insult to the utmost limits of forbearance. And I did this, not because of any wish to make any stand on my official character, but because I wished to ignore any such character as long as was possible. Surely it cannot be thought that if I had been in an official position I would have put up with one-tenth of the insults which were heaped upon me.

After I had been so treated I wrote, as I have said, to the Moostoufee, in the hope that he would have a stop put to such treatment. I was anxious to avoid any complication, and I appealed to the Moostoufee in the way I thought best calculated to that end. It is impossible to deal with Asiatics, or to word one's letters to them exactly as one would do to Europeans. I gave him an account of my treatment, and I asked him to disclaim on his part all hand in it. If he did so, I said I should be satisfied, but if he did not I would report it all to my Government.

I confess I cannot understand the grounds of this indictment. What I did do, was to put up with insult to the last possible limit of human forbearance, and then report it to the Afghan and Indian Governments. I was not in any way responsible for the insolence of the Afghans, and it really seemed to me that I deserved credit, not censure, for having, in the interests of peace, put such a curb on my feelings as to prevent any complications. If I had struck Shah Mahamad down, as I had every provocation to do, and as I most certainly would have done if I had been a private individual, there would have been, to say the least of it, a good deal more stir about the affair both then and afterwards.

If I had not reported the case to the Afghan Govern-

ment I considered I should have justly laid myself open to the imputation of allowing myself to be insulted, and taking no steps to call for an explanation, and, moreover, the bad treatment would not have ended when it did. Having considered it of sufficient importance to report it to the Afghan Government, I believed that I had no option but to report it also to my own Government.

However, it is perhaps less to be wondered at that I should have been thus rigorously judged, when I think of the manner in which my wanderings were spoken of by a portion of our irresponsible press. It will hardly be believed that one of the Calcutta papers took up as a serious request a joking remark I had made in a private letter, to the effect that some of my lady friends in Calcutta might soon have to open a fancy bazaar to ransom me from the Toorkmuns. Yet such is the case. I was regarded as a madman rushing into captivity in the hope of rescue by such means as these.*

* I am indebted to an unknown friend for the following note, in a London paper, in reply to the comment of the Indian paper alluded to.

"One or two of the Indian papers lately indulged in some very disparaging remarks on Colonel C. M. MacGregor's bold attempt to penetrate into Central Asia through Afghanistan. His efforts to gain new and important information regarding the Persian and Afghan frontiers were ridiculed and misrepresented, and the Indian Government were commended for cutting short the career of a madman, whose proceedings endangered the very interests he pretended to uphold. A private letter of sympathy to a poor Russian was magnified into a high political offence; the wearing of uniform on the Colonel's travels became the subject of a sneer at his official pretensions; and several other of his sayings and doings were misreported or misunderstood. The fact is that Colonel MacGregor did nothing to justify and little to palliate the attacks made upon him in certain quarters. It is true, indeed, that a standing order of the Indian Government forbids every officer from entering Afghanistan without special leave, and Colonel MacGregor might fairly have been attacked for disregarding that order. But to stop him, as it were, in mid-career, when he was gaining valuable information at his own risk

and cost for the Government, was an act of lawful authority of which the Home Government of India, if we are rightly informed, by no means approves. It was at any rate no fool's errand which sent Colonel MacGregor across the Indian frontier. For five years before his last journey he had been employed in compiling all the information available about Central Asia, and none, therefore, could know better than he did what kind of information was still needed. In his journey through Persia he gained all the requisite knowledge concerning the resources and roads of the districts adjoining the western frontier of Afghanistan, and but for his sudden recal he would have achieved a like success on the northern frontier. It was not from any idle freak, but in pursuance of a definite plan, that he undertook, at his own cost, a journey of many hundreds of miles in a strange country, a journey involving great and prolonged hardships, as well as the risk of being caught by roving Toorkmuns. He had three narrow escapes from capture during a ride of 3,000 miles; but the story of his being escorted by Afghans back to Tehran is no better grounded than that of his asking Mr. Thomson's leave to go to Herat. He never went to Tehran, nor saw the British Minister there, till four months after his visit to Herat."

CHAPTER IX.

KAREEZ TO MUSHUDD.

On arrival at Kareez, 24th June, Mahamad Sarwar, I think knowingly, took me into a Sheea mosque for my munzil. He had said there was a nice little garden there, where every one put up, and so I went to it unsuspectingly, and it was not for some time after I had arrived, and all my things were unpacked, that I discovered it was a mosque, and then Sarwar had gone. There is no doubt he did this on purpose, and I was much annoyed at it, as I always made a rule never to stay in a mosque, though I have very frequently been offered a place in one. In the first place, there can be absolutely no privacy in a mosque, as of course you cannot object to the faithful coming to pray, or stopping to pray all day if they like; and, secondly, although the headman, and most of the villagers, may not object in the very least, you have always the chance of some bigot making himself disagreeable. Kareez is a small place of about 100 houses, most of which are inside the fort, though there are some outside near a serai. The fort is a strong place, and might make a very decent resistance. The village is celebrated for its melons; but in order that the community may not enjoy too much bliss, it is also known as about the most exposed place on the frontier. The headman of this village, Mahamad Jan, was a most civil individual, and

a very acceptable change, after the boorishness of the Afghans. He did every little thing he could think of for me; and if he had been bred in the salons of the west, his manner and attentions could not have been more gentlemanly or thoughtfully considerate. Being an extremely intelligent, and, for an Asiatic, well-informed man, I was rather surprised that he had not sought to push his fortunes elsewhere in preference to remaining at this little exposed village. I mentioned this to him. He said, "Yes, it was not a nice place, but he had been born there, and had got accustomed to it; he had been to Tehran, and what he had seen there, the lying, intriguing, and dissipation that went on, had not inspired him with a wish to remain, and he thought he was much happier as headman of this place, where no official ever came." My friend was evidently a philosopher. He sent all over the country, too, to collect sowars to accompany me, as the men of the post were all out after Toorkmuns in the direction of Surrukhs, and said if he could not get sufficient, he would come himself. This happily, however, was not necessary, as some eight or nine men had been collected. The road first went over a low ridge, and then over the usual waste. It was said by the men to be very dangerous, and considering the number of hollows and ravines which would afford hiding places, I should think this was the case. Owing to the scarcity of sowars on the road, I had determined to go by the Shuhr-Now road, in preference to the better road by Jain. This, too, would take me over comparatively well known ground, and enable me to get good information of the direct road from Toorbut to Herat, which is an important line. My march to-day, 25th June, took me to Mushuddee-Reza, two small villages not far from the

Khauf range, and situated about a mile apart. My munzil was in the grounds of a shrine some way from the village, but having the advantage of good shade from some fine cypress trees, the first I had yet seen.

The two villages are about one mile apart, but connected by cultivation. The first has one hundred houses enclosed in a very tumble down fort; the second has only sixty, but the walls of its fort are in good order, and it is the residence of the headman. The Tomb, or Mazar, of Shahzada Kasim Alee is at the latter, and consists of a domed building of no architectural beauty, although the centre forms a very fine room. The water supply comes from a Karez, is good, and tolerably plentiful, and there is plenty of cultivation, and many young plantations of mulberry trees. The headman and his son, whose names I have forgotten, came to see me, bringing a present of apples and grapes, which was most acceptable. It appears that this village was depopulated about fifty years ago by the Afghans, who took all the inhabitants away to the Herat district, and it was not till after the capture of Herat by the Hissam-oo-Sultanut that they returned. The consequence is that though there is abundance of water and cultivation, the gardens have not reached yet a state of any great perfection. I talked with these people about the Russians; indeed, it is almost impossible to avoid doing so, for directly they know one is English, they commence their usual string of questions with: "When are the Russians coming to Herat?" &c. It has evidently been very industriously spread about in these parts, that though we are the most powerful at sea, they are more powerful on land; because every one I met said the same thing. It is not easy to answer these people, for they have been told

everything that leads to this belief. When I said, "No, the Russians are not more powerful than us, the only time we ever fought them we thrashed them, and, Inshalla, we will do it again;" the answer was, "Yes, but there were four vilayats* against them then, how will it be when you are alone?" Unpleasant as it may be to acknowledge, there is no doubt that the prestige is with Russia; the general opinion certainly is that they mean to take India, and that they will do so.

In Khorassan there is another opinion, which is as prevalent as belief in the Russians, and that is contempt of the "Kujjur."† This I have heard expressed over and over again, coupled with epithets the reverse of complimentary. So much is this the case that I do not think the Shah need ever hope for any active support from his Khorassanee subjects against Russia. I think they would fight against the Afghans or Turks, because they hate them; but they have no reason to dislike the Russians, while all the stories they hear induce respect for that Power. They are not, I think, in the least ill-disposed to the English, but they do not think much of them; we are all very well, they say, but we are not going to win.

The district I am passing through is called Bakhurz, and the population is made up in a great measure of descendants of Huzaras. The limits of this district include Shuhr-y-Now, Reza, and Kareez. It is very much exposed to Toorkmun raids, but the people have the reputation of being good soldiers. The soil of the whole district is excellent, but the great want here, as in most other parts of Persia, is water and inhabitants. I can, however, see no chance of the supply of the

* Countries.

† A Persian tribe to which the reigning dynasty of Persia belongs.

first being increased, as every drop that comes out of the hills is used up in cultivation, and there seems very little probability of the last increasing under a king who permits thousands to die of starvation when his own coffers were full to such repletion that an expensive visit to Europe scarcely diminished them.

I had to day, as usual, a number of applications from sick people to cure their complaints. One had a very nasty wound in the hand from the bite of a horse, and another, a woman, was suffering from a withered arm. To both of these I gave what I believed to be the right thing; but I am not going to enlighten the public, as, if my medical friends disagreed with me, I might be disillusioned of the idea that I had done some good on that day.

Next day, 26th June, I went on to Shuhr-y-Now, but I really cannot describe the road. Every road in Persia as yet seems to me to be exactly alike, so I beg that, except when I say anything to the contrary, my readers will take it for granted that the road went over a waste, with barren rugged hills in the distance, or near; no water, no houses, no people passed. However, the road on this march ascended imperceptibly to a low ridge, which runs out from the Khauf range, and divides the drainage of Kareez from that of Mohsinabad. This is crossed just before getting to Shuhr-y-Now, which is in a little basin.

This has been a large place, probably of not less than one thousand houses; but now, though its large fortified enclosures look very imposing from the outside, inside it is literally mostly filled with dead men's bones, there not being more than one hundred houses occupied. There is, however, a great deal of cultivation and very numerous gardens for so small a population, and, as

there is plenty of good water, cultivation might be increased to any extent almost. On all the graves round this place I noticed bits of a very pretty green stone, and on asking, was told that about a farsakh off there was a hill which was entirely composed of it. I regretted very much afterwards that I had not had time to visit this hill. The stone was very seldom in large pieces, and only once or twice did I see regular slabs, about the size of head stones. It is of a light green colour, perfectly clear and uniform, and looks like a green sandstone. There is also to be seen about here in the hills a beautiful red stone, with tints of purple and brown in it. Both these would probably be very appropriately used in ornamental architecture.

From Shuhr-y-Now the road leads up the right bank of a small stream the whole way to Kulla, now through cultivation and then through the most splendid pasture land I have seen in Persia. This is taken advantage of by the Huzaras, who graze a considerable number of horses in this tract.

Himmutabad, where I arrived on the 27th of June, is twelve miles from Shuhr-y-Now, and is a fort containing about one hundred houses of Huzaras of the Burrunguree section, a branch of the Huzaras of Baighiz, near Herat, all Soonees, with no connection, as they were careful to inform me, with the Sheea Huzaras between Herat and Kabul, whom they call Burburee. This valley is enclosed by hills; on the west is the Khauf range, on the east the Jam range, and these are connected by a ridge which crosses the north. The whole drainage goes past Shuhr-y-Now into Mohsinabad river, whence it goes into the Hurree Rood. I was very anxious to leave next morning early, as from the walls of the fort I had seen quite clearly the country

I had to go over; but my proposal was immediately received with loud remonstrances, of which fear of Toorkmuns formed the basis. It is no use, however, saying you are going to do anything in Persia unless you are prepared to hear all sorts of lies coined to prevent you. Besides, in this case it struck me that if we were supposed to be more afraid of Toorkmuns at night, the probabilities were that the Toorkmuns would be much more afraid of us; in fact, I believe that the night is the safest time to go. So I said, "I do not care, I am going at one." Hearing me so resolved, and when 1 A.M. came seeing me move off, my servants at last produced a guide, and we started (28th June). I had, as I said above, had a good look at the country on ahead the night before, and had got the bearing of our road; and so when I found the guide going off to the left, I asked him if he knew the road. "Oh, yes, every inch of it;" and every time afterwards when I ventured to suggest we were off the direct line, I was met by some such answer. Now, when a man who has, according to his own showing, been for forty years going up and down a road, persists that he is right, one must have immense confidence in one's eye for country to altogether disregard him; but, after two hours' wandering, the guide was obliged to confess that his head was going round, that, in fact, he did not know where we were, and we had better wait till morning. Now came my triumph, for I had never lost sight of a low peak which marked our road, and so I said I would be guide, and taking the party straight for the peak, I had the satisfaction when day broke of hitting upon the road, much to the discomfiture of the guide, who, strange to say, was thoroughly ashamed of himself, and being not even able to tell a lie, was speechless. I was

much amused, while we were being taken by the guide meandering all over the country, by the conduct of the muleteer, Budrooee. Several times he came up to me and whispered, "Sahib, where is he taking us to? Don't go with him, he is a Toorkmun. They are all Toorkmuns here." But I was convinced from the man's manner and appearance that he was only stupid not treacherous; so I disregarded the warnings of Budrooee, and persisted in following him. This was too much for Budrooee's nerves, and at last he came up and said, "Sahib, I am not going on. I have got a wife and children at Sheeraz, and I am not going to be carried off or killed by Toorkmuns. You may go if you like, but I won't;" and with this he left me, and dropped to the rear. When day broke we found ourselves only about six miles off the fort, with the hills still six more ahead of us, and so I pushed on as fast as possible, Budrooee having rejoined me as soon as it became light. The road lay over an extensive plain, which rose very gradually to the fort of the hills, and was covered with thick scrub. The soil of this tract was excellent, and as the river runs close by to the west, there is no reason why the whole of it should not be diverted from its present purpose, of merely affording grazing, to cultivation.

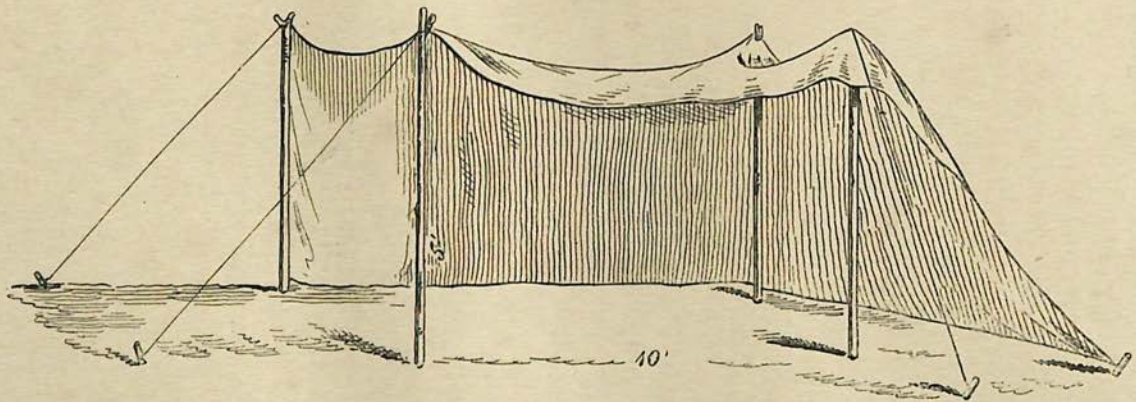
When we had got about two miles off the hills my bird of ill omen, Budrooee, suddenly gave a sort of shriek, and called out, "Sowar! Toorkmun!" and, without waiting, made straight for a hill half a mile on the right. Budkhooee was not quite so bad, and waited till I had looked with my glasses, which I at once did, and there sure enough, about three miles off, were about twenty sowars dressed in dark clothes, with black hats. At last, I thought, we are in for it; I looked again,

only, however, to be confirmed in my belief. They were clearly sowars, and they were coming towards us. I gave a rapid glance round the country to look for a place of refuge, but all round was a plain; only in one direction was a low hill, the one Budrooee had instinctively made tracks for; and so, turning my horse's head, I said to my brave army—which consisted of my boy, a Persian servant named Mahamad, and Budkhooee—"Make for the hill." Directly I had uttered these words, Budkhooee, who was mounted on a pony, gave him a thwack, and away he went towards the hill as if a thousand Toorkmuns were after him, taking one of my pistols. Feeling that I had now had proof enough that the Persians would not stand by me, I determined that my boy and self would fish for ourselves; and so, taking from him the rifle, I told him to go on and get as high up the hill as he could, while I brought up the rear. I looked several times, and each time felt sure I had made no mistake; there was no doubt about their being sowars, or about their coming towards us. I thus felt sure we were in for a bout with these Toorkmuns, and of course, as it does on these occasions, everything seemed to flash before me—all my life, down to that moment; then came a picture of a fight on the hill-side, and the thought whether in a few minutes more I should be dead or a prisoner. At last we got within a quarter of a mile of the hill, and Budrooee and Mahamad, whom we caught up, both quite green with fright, and dead beat with their unwonted hurry, seemed ready to drop. I could get them to go no farther, and as it was impossible to think of remaining and receiving the attack of twenty horsemen on the level, and as, despite their unfaithfulness, I could not quite bring myself to abandon them and leave them to

shift for themselves, I got off my horse and told them to mount. Thus we ran on, and I clambered up the hillock, taking my Snider carbine from my boy; but I was too blown to be able to make any use of it. The Toorkmuns were now about a mile off, coming towards us at a canter, so I utilized the few seconds which remained before they came within range by lying down and recovering my breath; meanwhile Pascal had jumped off my horse and arrived at the top of the hill. Budkhooe and Mahamad were running towards us, ever and anon casting a glance to the rear. Presently the horsemen came within 600 yards, and I could see them quite plainly; only four had firearms, or, at least guns, three had spears, and the rest swords, and perhaps pistols. My object was not to draw blood, but trust to their sheering off, for this was my only hope. So I fired four shots from the Snider, as fast as I could, taking care not to hit any one. At the first they slackened their pace, at the second stopped, and then seemed to consult. Fighting is not what a Toorkmun comes for; and, when the next two shots were fired, they doubtless thought that there were four men, at least, armed with guns, on a hillock not easy to get at. They then went back a few yards and got into a ravine, which hid all but the spears from us. This was a moment of great anxiety, and I eagerly scanned the look of the country to see if I could trace where the ravine led to. I felt much relieved to find it ran straight on to join the river below Himmutabad, away from us. After a few seconds, which seemed to me hours, I saw two black specks appear over the edge of the ravine, and I knew, from my glasses, that these were heads, and I concluded heads would not start up in this fashion without reason. Then came two shots, to which I did not reply. More seconds, and then an evident

commotion in the ravine, and the Toorkmuns all came out and rode round our hillock to the north-east; but they had not gone far when I heard several shots away to the north, and, looking, saw a crowd of men on foot coming over an undulation in the ground. No sooner did the Toorkmuns see them than they turned their horses and rode straight away to the south-east at a gallop, and we were safe. I shouted a yell of triumph; for, though I did not know who our preservers were, I preferred being allowed to continue my way towards Mushudd instead of making a detour by Merv. I then looked round at my companions. There was little change in Pascal's appearance; his face retained much of the cheerful, chubby expression it always had; but Mahamad was a sight—I don't know what colours you would have to mix to produce the particular green which overspread his not beauteous countenance. He was past speaking too; fear had made his remaining wits fly. Budrooee was better; with him it was not so much fear, as what we might soon have all been suffering from—want of breath. He had taken in the fact of our deliverance, and was trying to blubber out sounds of joy, but no sound would come; his throat was parched beyond all speaking, and he only gulped convulsively.

When I had seen my late friends well off, I lost no time in getting down the hillock, and mounting my horse, I made for our deliverers. All were now in the best of spirits; safety, combined with a little water, loosened the tongue of Budrooee, and in a loud voice, and with that insane sort of laugh one gives when one is *very glad*, he informed us "He had made up his mind to die by me: he would never have been carried off alive. The Toorkmuns," he went on to say, "are not



I. PERSIAN NOMAD TENT. [*To face page* 261.

really brave, and there is no doubt that if you show a bold front, as we did, Sahib, the dogs generally sheer off. Ah!" he cried, firing off one of my pistols which I had lent him, "if these unsainted sons of burnt fathers had come a little closer!"

Soon we came up to the party whose opportune arrival had so fortunately saved us. They belonged to a camp of Taemoorees close by, and there were about forty of them, while others came straggling up from the rear. At their head was Budkhooee. Under ordinary circumstances I should have liked to have kicked him; but though he had bolted with the sole object of saving his own skin, his doing so had also saved ours, and I was in no humour for severity. Going on over the hill we came on to the camp of these people, which had been thrown into a great state of commotion by Budkhooee's arrival; the flocks had been driven off, and the women were streaming with their bairns towards the hills on the west. The headman was a sufficiently good looking man of about fifty, of the name of Haibat; and going up to him, I thanked him heartily, and presented him with the pistol the recreant Budkhooee had carried off. Then at his invitation I alighted for a while, and drank some curds and tried to eat his coarse bread, but could not. I asked Haibat if he had heard of the Toorkmuns, and he replied that he had not, but he supposed they must have taken advantage of the Jam horse being away in the direction of Zorabad, and slipped past Jam, and have meant to look out for travellers to Toorbut. Now there was no more fear, as they would be sure to make tracks for the Hurree Rood, and hide till they could get past to Surrukhs. As, however, we had still far to go that day, I could not delay long, and we were soon on the way again.

The road from this ascends gradually for eight miles to the top of the Gardan Kullat Dunar, and is quite good and practicable for artillery. The pass, however, abounds in strong positions, and the road is completely commanded by a very steep, rugged, and impracticable ridge, which runs along the right the whole way. There is abundance of water, and as the soil is good, there is no reason why these hills should not support a considerable population, if there were any. The climate, too, on this range, is quite lovely; the sun, though hot, is not too powerful to prevent a man remaining out in it and working during all but, say, four hours in the middle of the day. For this reason, I am of opinion that Europeans could easily colonise this and similar parts of Persia; not that I recommend any one to do so, however, because, though the climate and the soil are suitable, it would be impossible for any European to live under the tyranny of a Persian ruler.

The range which I was now crossing is called by various names, according to the fancy of the informant; but it is clear that the proper name for it is the Jam range, as it runs through the district of this name. I see it has been suggested that it should be called the Toorbut range, as it divides the two Toorbuts; but this is not the case, for in order to go from one Toorbut to the other two ranges are crossed, the first coming from the west, the continuation of the Bakhurz range into the Himmutabad valley, and then this, which I call the Jam range. The ridge which is crossed by the Kulla Minar pass is connected to the west with the Bakhurz range. It first runs east and west, but to the east of this pass turns more south, and has a general direction from north-west to south-east. On the east it sheds its drainage towards Jam, on the west to the Mahamabad

river, and it seems, from the account in Captain Clerk's excellent route, to end in the same sort of low ridge as the one I crossed before getting to Shuhr-i-Shao.

The descent from the pass is very easy, through a picturesque valley with trees and water, and bounded by rugged ridges of a red stone. This valley, as indeed the whole way from Shuhr-y-Now, is the most splendid grazing ground, even in July, which is about the worst time of the year, and for this reason it is clearly the line that should be taken by the cavalry of a force proceeding to the east, if other things permitted.

At six miles from the summit are a few hovels called Kulla Minar, but they are so hidden in a hollow in the hill that I missed them and went on. Shortly after, the road comes to the defile of Kulla Minar, and winds by a narrow path over a difficult slope, with the hills close up on both sides. This part is certainly impracticable for artillery as it stands, but it could easily be made practicable in a few hours, as the soil of the hill is soft. The defile at the north entrance is almost completely shut up by the hill, and a few hours' work here would render this one of the strongest positions that could be found anywhere. The hills on both sides come down and seem to meet, and do actually come within thirty feet of each other. Behind is a semi-detached hill, which, rising abruptly and perpendicularly out of the bed of the river, commands the whole valley as far as the range of rifled artillery. This hill, though in shape more conical than Kulla Minar, is that which gives its name to the pass and valley. It is composed, as are the hills on either side, entirely of the beautiful red stone which I have mentioned before. In my ignorance of geology, I am unable to say what this is; its colour is a dark red, with tints of brown and purple, and it is something like sand-

stone in grain, but a good deal harder. If this stone can be cut into blocks suitable for building, it would afford a most beautiful material for that purpose; and there is the additional advantage of its being almost inexhaustible.

Having missed the hamlet of Kulla Minar, we passed through the defile and went on down the valley. I asked every one I met how far it was, and was always told one farsang; but at last one man was intelligent enough to say that it was behind us. Finding this to be the case, I determined to have breakfast and feed the animals at once; so stopping under the first tree, we took our rest.

By this time it must have been 3 P.M., but though the sun was hot, there was such a delicious cool wind blowing, that I enjoyed this little rest immensely, after my thirty-five miles march. Being thus in a philanthropic state of mind, it afforded me pleasure to think that I was the source of considerable enjoyment to a simple shepherd, who, having left his sheep to their own devices, came to take his full of the greatest "tamasha" he had ever seen. Indeed, I daresay it is very little fun he gets in this life, and his astonishment and pleasure at everything was very amusing. He sat down in front of me, watching my every movement; and the manner in which I sat, in which I ate, my hat, boots, teacup, knives and forks and plates, were all sources of intense enjoyment to him. He did not care for rifles, pistols or swords, he preferred to look at more peaceful articles, and at the end he was pleased to express his approval of the manner in which I had carried out the performance by saying what may be freely translated into English by, "By Jove you *are* a good fellow!" This individual had a very fine dog, the best specimen I have seen in Persia.

He was very large and handsome, and when he flew at you, as he did at me, till we got on better terms, the hair about his neck and head stood out, making him look enormously big and formidable. The shepherd only wanted eight krans for him, and I would have bought him, but my finances were so low that I could not afford it at the time.

My friend the shepherd offered to guide us till we got a view of the next village of Gowdoosee, and about 5 P.M. we started. The road left the valley of Kulla Minar (which runs on and comes out opposite Kullundurabad, to which is the best road), and crossed numerous low but steep spurs. The guide was in a well kept condition (which perhaps showed that he partook plentifully of the produce of his flocks), and was not very well able to get up these little hills, especially as the sun was very hot; so he gradually divested himself of all superfluous articles, putting them always on the far side of a thorn bush, to pick up on his return, a proof that he did not expect many passers by that way.

Just as it was getting dark we got to Gowdoosee, a ruined fort in a very strong position, high above the left bank of a stream, with steep scarped sides. There was formerly a village here, but the Toorkmuns had gradually carried nearly all the inhabitants off, and there were only a few tents round the fort. This could no doubt be made almost impregnable, as it is not commanded, and a short covered way would enable the garrison to procure water from over the cliff. I bivouacked on a little bit of level below, and the inhabitants came up and had a talk. They were all Taemoorees, very fine, manly looking fellows, with a fine healthy hatred of the Toorkmuns, and very pronounced contempt of the Kujjurs. Poor devils, they had reason at least for the first feeling; there

was not a man who had not suffered some loss, and very few of the elder ones who had not been prisoners. One man a month before had lost his wife, two daughters and a son, by these dogs of Toorkmuns, and he was in the depths of despair. He knew he could never ransom them; he had nothing, and the price demanded was 3,000 krans. He said if he could only be sure they would take him to the same place he would go and get taken himself. They all said that if the Kujjurs were not such contemptible characters they would go and take them and release their people; they would one and all go and fight the Toorkmuns. But they could expect nothing from the Kujjurs, and they eagerly asked when the Russians were coming, adding, "May God send them speedily!" This showed how the fame of the noble deed of the Russians in releasing all the slaves in Khiva has spread, and to what extent they have most deservedly gained prestige by it.

The whole of the latter part of to-day's march was covered with the very beautiful plant called Zirishk. This grows on a single stem, and its flowers are thrown out on little stems, nearly at right angles, being long at bottom and gradually lessening to a point at the top. When the flowers are new, those at the top are of a delicate green, and become gradually lighter and lighter as they approach the bottom, where they are pure white. But when they are older, those at the top change to a lovely dark pink, which is shaded off gradually into a very delicate tint of the same colour at the bottom. This would certainly form a most worthy addition to our flower culture in England, and I should say it would flourish there. Another very pretty flower I noticed in this day's march was a thorn bush, with small violet flowers on the stems, which were smoothed off so care-

fully that these plants looked exactly like a foot stool with worsted work on the top. I did not catch the Persian name for these, and do not know the botanical one. Next day, 29th June, a small Taemooree volunteered to show me the road, and we set off over the same sort of road as in the latter part of yesterday's march, *i.e.*, over low round spurs and undulations from the main range. After about four miles of this we came to a little valley and the Bund-y-Furreemoon. This is a large dam, which is erected across the valley at a point where the water drops five feet, to raise the water of the stream sufficiently to enable it to be carried off by canals to the fields of Furrimoon, which are considerably above the natural drainage level of the stream when it gets into the plains. The dam is strongly made of stone and brick, and is about eighty yards across, twelve feet wide at top, and about fifty feet high. It is now partially ruined, but formerly the water coming against the dam accumulated till it got to a height sufficient to enable it to flow off to the channels cut for it at the left side, any excess escaping by two wells, which run down to the foot of the original drop. It was erected by an individual called Furreedoon, said to have been a king, and the name has now been changed into Furreemoon.

From the Bund, the road goes over a plain for three miles to the village of Furreemoon. Here I was very hospitably received by the Chief, Nussuroola Khan, who insisted on providing everything. He was formerly the Governor of Jam, but has lately been in the bad books of the Wullee, and now only has authority over his own village, and the sowars belonging to it. These last, however, consist of about 200 very fair specimens of irregular horse, being all well mounted, and respectably armed. The Khan showed me his horses,

and as he is known to have always the best blood of the Tukkehs, it may be useful if I here give some idea of what these Toorkmun horses are like. They are, in my opinion, one of the few things, in that fearful imposture Central Asia, that come up to their reputation, and are far and away the best oriental horses, after Arabs, that I have seen. In some respects they are superior; in stature and bone they approach the English horse. Some of them range up to 16 hands, and they have very fine crests; they are, in fact, rather like an English carriage horse. They are very enduring, and are altogether fine animals; the worst point being a deficiency in bone below the knee, which makes them unsuitable for carrying heavy weights, if the pace is at all fast. But for chargers for light weights, or for ladies' horses in India, they would be most suitable. Nussuroola Khan showed me several, and I would have bought some, had I possessed the money. I, however, selected three, and said I would write to him, or come and see him again from Mushudd. The price for these, which were really very good ones, would have been about 40 to 50 tomams, though some go as high as 100 tomams. No doubt large numbers would be forthcoming, if there were a market for them, such as India would become were Afghanistan quiet; but the disturbed state of that country, and the treacherous, untrustworthy character of its inhabitants would make their importation a very precarious undertaking. The only other way of getting them to India, viz., down to Bundur Abbass by land, and then by sea, would also be very risky, from the long land journey, the scarcity of forage, and the impossibility of getting trustworthy men at Mushudd to bring them down. At Furreemoon I visited

Nussuroola Khan in the evening, and he received me in the open air in a garden. All his people were sitting in two long rows, while at the head were places for us both; the whole space was carpeted, and down the middle on the ground was arranged a row of candles, which gave a pretty effect to the scene. I had been requested to bring my rifle for the tamasha of the Khan's son, and so I brought everything I thought would amuse them, including rifle, pistol, binoculars, scissors, drinking cup, &c. They were immensely pleased with all, but the general opinion seemed to me that there were two insuperable objections to breech-loading firearms in this country, first, the price, second, the fact of their having patent cartridges, which they could not make for themselves.

It was here that I saw my first Toorkmun chief, in the shape of Burda Morad Bai, a friend of Nussuroola's, and a most favourable specimen of the race. He could not talk a word of Persian, nor I of Toorkee, so our conversation was not very fluent; however, I gathered, by the aid of Nussuroola's interpretations, that he said the Tukkehs were the servants of the English, and would always be glad to see them, but that they would kill any Russian they came across. Of course, I always took this sort of talk "cum grano," and drew my friend out. He said the Tukkehs were determined to fight till the last; when the Russians came, and when they could not fight any longer, they would all emigrate to Afghanistan, probably higher up the Moorghab. I was rather struck with this, and had a number of questions put to him, to find out whether they were really disposed to do so; and from his answers I should say he was speaking the truth. They are convinced that the Russians mean to have Merv

before long, and, notwithstanding their boastings, are equally sure that they cannot really hope to withstand them; therefore this forethought is but natural. Whether it would be to the advantage of the Afghans or us to have these people as subjects, is another question. The position of Mowr,* though a very important one, is not so important as I was before inclined to believe, principally because it is off the only road through the Toorkmun country, by which any very serious advance could be attempted. It owes its importance not so much to its position, as to the fact of its having water. Its position is rather "en l'air," and if the Tukkehs could be withdrawn to a position on the Moorghab, where they could be controlled, and their attention turned to cultivation, it would lose its value. For there is abundance of waste land on the banks of the Moorghab, with an excellent soil which only requires water, and if that of the Moorghab was drawn on to any considerable extent, very little would reach to Merv. This, however, is a mere idea; if we were on the Moorghab, it might be feasible, but with a nation of such characteristics as the Afghans, such an experiment would most likely fail, for having once got the Toorkmuns into their power, they would most likely tyrannize over them to such an extent that they would be ready to admit any one who would free them, and thus the last state of affairs would be worse than the first. This, however, is a fact, which must be faced by the English Government, in whatever relations they undertake with the Afghans, for as sure as any calculations are made, which do not allow for the faithlessness of this race, so surely will they end in failure, if not in disaster.

* Another name for Merv.

The Toorkmuns are held in the greatest respect by the Persians. They have an idea that they are very brave, and that it is no use resisting them, and will not see that much of the success of these people is owing to their going about unarmed themselves, and the miserable supineness of their own Government. There is little wonder that they fear the Toorkmuns so much, for there is a reality about their raids which is quite startling. I had read a great deal about them, but till I came here was not prepared to accept all I heard. Now, however, I find those accounts have in no wise been exaggerated. Wherever one goes it is the same: stories of fathers, husbands, wives, or daughters carried off by these ruthless scoundrels and sold into slavery, in most cases quite hopelessly. It is not too much to say that every man you meet has suffered some ill at their hands, and on every march I see in the abandoned houses and ruined karezes signs of their fatal visits. The only cause of this is the utter inertness of the Government. They do almost nothing, and what they do is quite wasted. Between Herat and Mushudd there are not less than 1,000 sowars, who are perpetually kept on the alert, and whose whole lives are wasted in, for the most part, fruitless chases after these dogs, because there is no head, no plan of action, no combination. These sowars, though sufficiently efficient for the purpose, have little chance of coping with the evil, for each chief of ten, twenty, fifty, or one hundred, does what he likes—mounts if he likes or remains at home, flies off on an unfounded rumour fifty miles; or puffs on at his kaleeoon if not inclined to attend to the most unmistakable proofs of their presence. It is true that, years ago, an attempt was made to attack Merv, but it ended, as it deserved, only in disastrous failure, which

makes every governor now chary of burning his fingers. Yet the cause of failure was not because the Tukkehs were too brave, or the Persians not powerful enough, but simply because the latter started off on this expedition without any plan and without any one acknowledged leader. Consequently on a simple alarm the whole force dissolved almost without fighting, leaving all their guns, baggage, and prisoners in the hands of the Toorkmuns. I remember I used to think the state of our Tank border in the Derajat as very extraordinary, but this leaves it far behind in the scale of unfitness. Yet there seems to me but little difficulty in putting an end to this state of affairs, and what there is is rather due to the Persians than the Toorkmuns. If an efficient force could be got together, under a leader of average determination, the Tukkehs must submit, and if they did, the conquering of the Goklans and Akhals* would be easy. If the Russians are really as anxious as they assert they are to keep what they have got, and not look for more, all that need be asked from them is that they should forbid (as they are quite able to), absolutely, the purchase of all slaves in the khanates of Khiva, Bokhara, and Khokand which are tributary to them; and let us do the same with all the states of Toorkistan under our influence, as South Toorkistan, Badakshan, and Yarkand. This, the first step, would cut them off from any market; and if it was followed by expeditions, properly organized, from Astrabad against the Goklans, from Boojnoord against the Akhals, and Mushudd against the Tukkehs, a few months would see the end of this crying evil; or if some faint spirit still lingered amongst them, efficient arrangements on the frontier from Mushudd to Herat would

* Tukkehs, Goklans, and Akhals are tribes of Toorkmuns.

soon stamp it out. This seems, to my humble view, a work for which Russia and England may well lay aside their rivalry and join in granting to the wretched people of Persia on the Toorkmun border the security and freedom they have not known for ages.

The sacrifices they would be called on to make to secure this end are as nothing compared with what these countries have already undergone. Russia has released millions of her own subjects from serfdom, and England has paid millions to secure freedom to the negro races of Africa. Here they would only be required to throw the weight of their influence, manfully and honestly, into the scale in order to force Persia to rouse itself and the khanates to cease from slave purchase. If the rich people of Europe, and far more of England, would but give of their plenty a tithe to assist, the good work might be crowned by the raising of a subscription sufficient to set every slave free, from Siberia to the Persian Gulf.

The case, too, seems to me one worthy of far more sympathy than that of the African negroes. In the latter case the slaves are taken from a country steeped in barbarism, to one where their condition in the material requirements of food, clothing, and shelter are immeasurably bettered; in the former, an intelligent people, with a certain amount of civilization, are carried off to be the slaves of those who are inferior to them in all the amenities of life and aliens in religion.

No doubt the Russians have already done a good deal by releasing the slaves at Khiva, but much remains to be done; the evil is scotched, not killed. To be of any use, it must be stamped out without any reserve; and it seems to me that this would be work far more

worthy of great Powers than a rivalry for more land, when both have more than they can well manage.

At Furreemoon I was met by a servant of the English agent, Abbass Khan, who brought out the most acceptable present he could have thought of, viz., a piece of ice. He also brought orders from the Wullee to provide me with escorts and treat me properly—attentions very different from those of the Afghans. With the exception of a couple of miles at the beginning, the march to Sungbust is all over a waste of low undulating hills which bound the valley of Jam to the west, and are the link connecting the Jam range with that of the Koh Goghar range on the north.

This tract is considered very dangerous, as the Toorkmuns are enabled to come in through the Koh-i-Chehl Sung range (which runs parallel with that of Goghar, and is everywhere practicable) from the direction of Surrukhs. The Persians have got a line of look-out towers placed on commanding sites all along the north flank of this road, and these would no doubt prove useful under efficient arrangements, but they are, as a rule, left without any look-out men, very much like a lighthouse without a light. About halfway we passed a ruined village called Faizabad, which, four years ago, the Toorkmuns had surprised when most of the men were out, and had carried off every soul—about 100—out of it. This information was told me by a man who had lost his wife, three sons, and a daughter in this way. Poor devil! I pitied him, and could well appreciate the motive which induced him to say, "Oh, sahib, I wish to God either you or the Russians would come and free us from these devils."

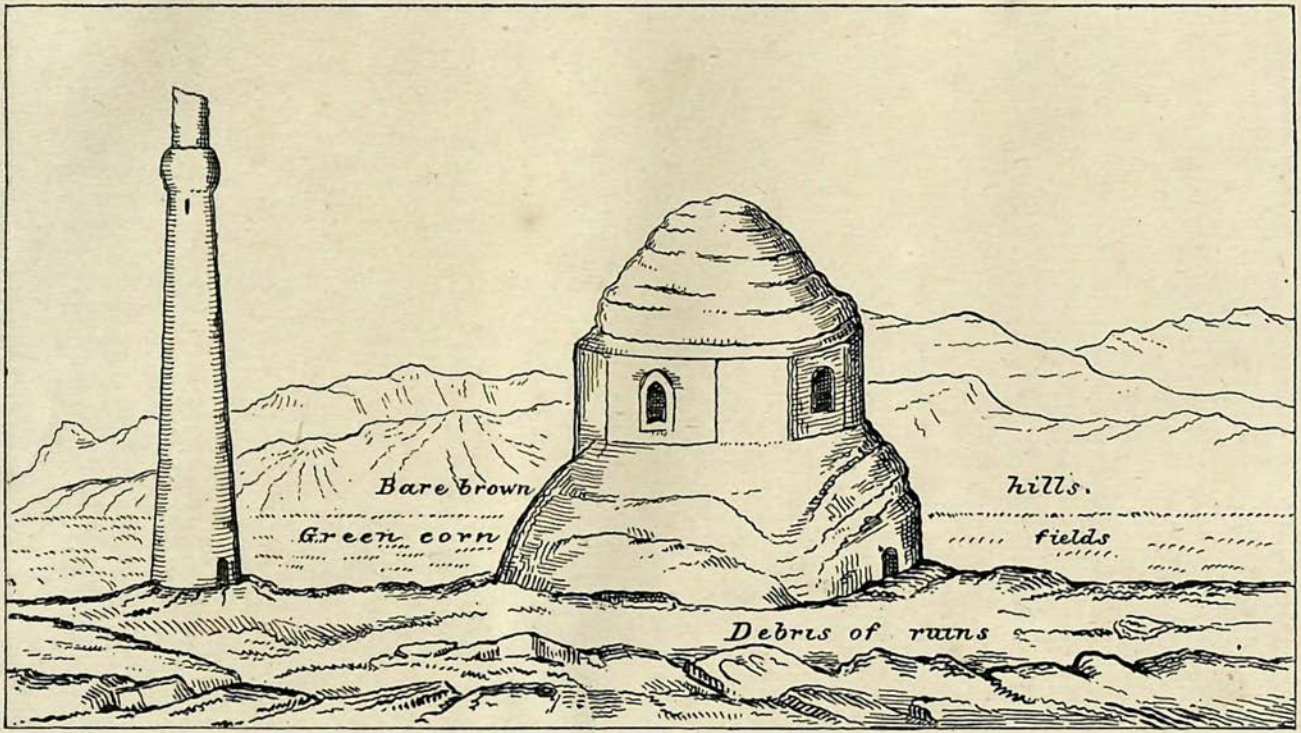
As the sowars objected to marching in the dark, we did not get into Sungbust till past noon on the 30th of

June, and the sun was very hot. However, on arrival I found that the Chief, Dowlut Morad Khan, had very kindly prepared a nice clean house for my reception, and soon in the delights of a cold bath I forgot all the heat and dust of the road. Sungbust is the first and only village I have seen in Persia which has been regularly laid out. There was formerly a village here, which had become ruined, and for this reason and because it was an object to encourage people to settle here, the Governor of Khorassan, Hissam-oo-Sooltanut, laid out the present village fifteen years ago. The walls are built of burnt brick taken from the old village, and are about twenty feet high. The village is square, with a ditch all round and gates at the north and south sides. Down the centre from north to south is a fine broad street, with houses built on a uniform plan all the way. In the middle of the road is an aqueduct, and half way between the gates is an open octagonal space, with a basin for water in the middle. At intervals streets lead off at right angles right up to the wall, all round which there is a roadway. Altogether there is accommodation for about 500 families; but the Hissam's attempt did not thrive, and there are not more than 100 houses occupied, and the whole place wears a deserted forlorn look. Owing also to this scarcity of population, the walls could not be manned in more than one direction at a time, so that if the Toorkmuns had any enterprise they might easily master it and carry off the whole of the inhabitants. Sungbust is plentifully supplied with water from Karezes, and the present supply could be very much increased, as only twenty out of the eighty "joos" of water arranged for by the Hissam are now in order.* The population

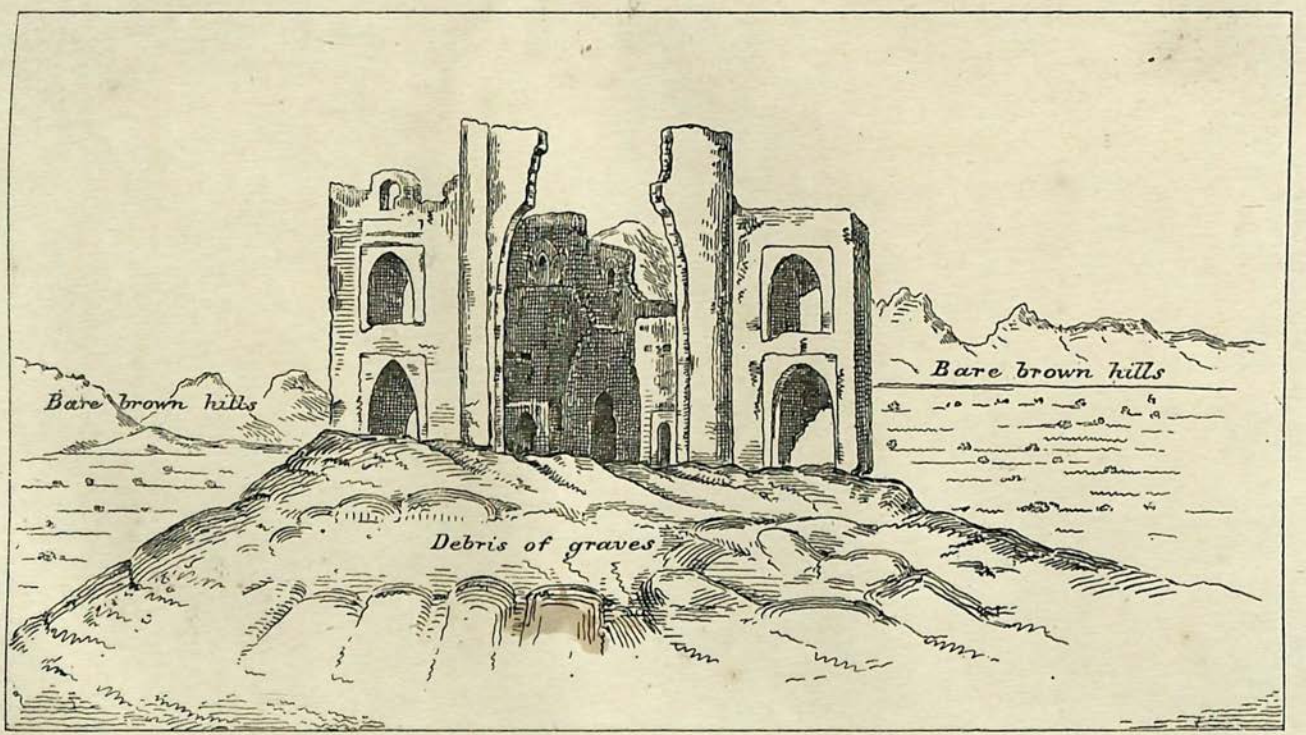
* Stream or channels of water used for irrigation.

is composed of a mixture of Koords from Durraguz, Huzaras from Bakhurz, and nondescript Owghans, and really only consists of the frontier sowars and their families. Close to the north-east angle of this town is a pillar of considerable beauty and symmetry, called Meel-y-Ayaz, and close by is the tomb of the individual of this name, who, my informant said, was Vazeer to Mahmood Ghuznavee. Both are built of good burnt brick, and though now in ruins, sufficient remains to prove that they were erected by no mean architect. The tomb is a domed octagonal building, erected on a square pyramidal base of about fifty feet. From the level ground there have been four entrances, but all but one are now closed, and the square base has a flight of steps all round which lead up to eight windows in the octagonal upper part. The tomb of Ayaz is a huge structure of brick on a level with the ground. The Meel, or pillar of Ayaz, eighty feet high, is also built of brick, and is of graceful proportions, with a sort of fretted plinth at top. On the east and south side there is an appearance as if it had been part of some other building, and from the ruins in its vicinity I should be inclined to say that there was probably a musjid here formerly, of which this is the only part standing.

I went and called on Dowlut Morad Khan, and as he was suffering from fever I took with me some quinine, which I gave him. He is a cousin of the Chief of Durraguz, and on one occasion when that individual was in the black books of the Government, acted for a year as Khan. He is a slight, sickly looking man, but is very intelligent, and has quiet gentlemanly manners. He gave me a mixture to drink, which was really too much for my politeness, and so after tasting, I was obliged to acknowledge I could not drink it. It



I. MEEL-Y-AYAZ. [To face page 276.



I. EIWAN, NEAR TUROKH. [To face page 277.

is called "See Kanjibeen," and is held in high esteem as a cooling drink by the Persians, but it is, in fact, simply vinegar, sugar, and water. To say nothing of its taste, it brought back too vividly the days when I used to suffer from fever in Bhotan, and employed a somewhat similar mixture to cool my heated brow. Next day, 1st of July, I marched into Mushudd over the same sort of country, as far as Torokh, a village of five hundred houses, walled, and with a great deal of cultivation, protected by numerous Toorkmun towers. The range to the right of the road, which are called Koh-i-Sar-i-Jam, end quite abruptly; there is a break of some distance before the Mehrab range commences. There is no doubt, however, that the latter is a continuation of the former, as between Shurreefabad and Nishapoor, is a low ridge, which drains on one side to the Ab-y-Mushudd, and on the other to the Nishapoor valley, and the Mehrab range takes this main range on to the hills of the Attruk. At Torokh is a ruined arch of considerable architectural beauty, which seems to have been the entrance to a tomb or mosque. None of the people knew what it was called, but I had a man with me who read from an inscription that it was erected over two brothers, Syuds, who had died four hundred years ago.

The approach to Mushudd from the south is not in the least striking, for nothing is seen but a long mud wall, topped here and there with a line of the inevitable poplar. The dome of the Imam* certainly glistens brightly, and is seen a long way off, but it is too small to appear to advantage at a distance. Some way out I was met by Abbass Khan, and was delighted to find that there had been a mistake caused

* Mosque of Imam Reza.

by the introduction of the circumlocution element into Khorassan, and I was to be spared the usual "istikbal," though a hope was expressed that I would halt an hour, and it would come out. The sun, however, was very hot, and I don't think I would have waited if the Shah-in-Shah himself said he would come to meet me. We, therefore, went straight to Abbass Khan's house. I was rather amused by his talk of the visitors he had had, and to find he has adopted a new mode of reckoning, by which the year 1872 is named "Sal-y-Captain Marsh; 1873, Sal-y-Colonel Baker; and 1874, Sal-y-Captain Napier; so I imagine it is the sad fate of '75 to be handed down to posterity as "Sal-y-Colonel Macgregor."

Although I was not allowed, as above described, to visit Herat, I had by no means given up the idea of going there. My object in wishing to visit it had been threefold; the first was personal, and only to extend my trip as far as I could; the life I had been leading, hard as it was, seemed to me less bitter than a return to a civilization, where at every turn I should be reminded of the past. To me it was all the same where I went; but I did not on that account forget that I might make my travels useful to Government. I thought that besides sending information of the state of the defences of Herat, I might clear up that important point in the geography of Afghanistan, viz., the country lying between Herat and Kabul. Parts of this tract had been visited; Connolly went from Kabul to Merv, but he had kept to the north of the range Firband-y-Turkistan. Ferrier had crossed it from north to south; Eldred Pottinger had visited parts of the Huzara country; while the Russian *Scientific* Mission had been up the valley of the Hurree Rood, as far as Oobeh, but no European had gone from Herat to

Kabul, by the direct route, and to accomplish this was the real object of my going to Herat.

I had unfortunately miscalculated in regard to the treatment I should receive at the hands of the Afghans. I had not made sufficient allowance for their suspicious nature, and had not known of any order of the Amir's absolutely prohibiting the entrance of his *friends*, the English. I had seen something, it is true, of the working of that policy called "masterly inactivity," and according to a high authority miscalled, for it is neither a policy, nor is it masterly or inactive. I had found in Khorassan how high Russian prestige was, but I was not prepared to find the English name sunk so low, English prestige so absolutely extinct, that I should be refused even a night's lodging in Herat.

So, when this happened, I was something taken aback. It was clear that Shah Mahamad had orders not to let me go to Herat, and though on that first day's march to Deh Minar I revolved in my mind all the possibilities of still getting there, I came to the conclusion it could not be done. Any attempt on my part to force my way would be clearly futile, and might end in blood being spilt. Therefore I acquiesced in my own return to Mushudd, and as I thought it all over, I decided that I should have a better chance of succeeding by going quietly to Mushudd and commencing thence afresh; and by the time I arrived I had made a plan. It was to stay at Mushudd awhile, recruit my purse, my animals, servants, and self; and then starting make for Merv, and thence try and find my way by way of the Oxus to Kolab, then back to Bamian, and then come down to Herat by the Hurree Rood, and pay my friend the Moostoufee a visit after all. It was half in bravado that I had said to Mahamad Alam at Kareez,

"I will go to Herat still;" but the idea of thus circumventing the Afghans was even then floating in my mind. Therefore at Furreemoon and Sungbust I had long talks with Nussuroola, Dowlut Morad, and Burdee Morad Bai, in which they all agreed as to the feasibility of the trip as far as Merv, as long as I was prepared to run the necessary risk, and the latter agreed to find out for me, with as little delay as possible, whether the leading chief of the Tukkehs, Gowsheed Khan, would receive me. He promised to send me word to Mushudd as soon as he possibly could, so that it was with a heart bounding high with hopes of the adventure before me that I entered the sacred city of Mushudd the blessed.

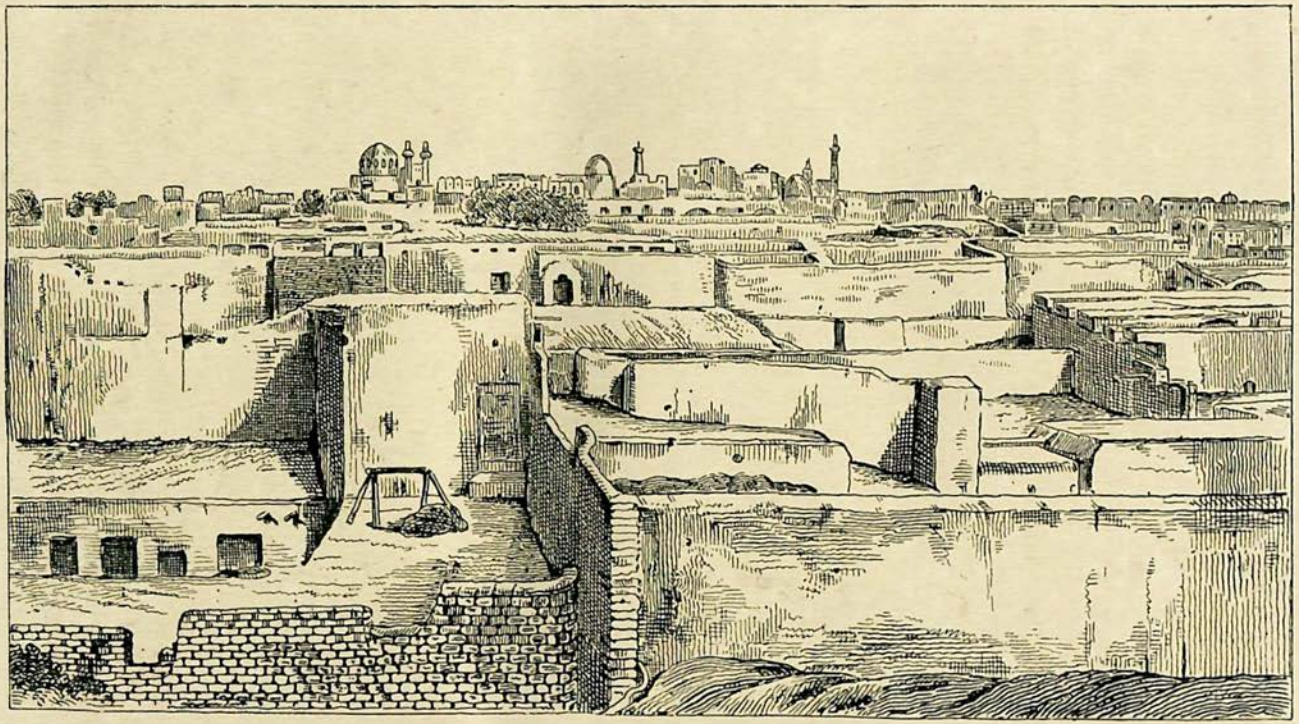
Piloted by Abbass Khan, we entered the gateway, much to the dismay of the sentry, who was peacefully having his dinner in a neighbouring shop. Somehow, he had got a sort of spirit of discipline, and wiping his mouth, he rushed for his musket, and went through a burlesque of presenting arms. Winding through interminable and narrow streets, we at last came to the house of Abbass Khan, who insisted on being my host, at all events, at first. The house was not a very inviting one, the only entrance was through a dark and narrow lane, completely covered in by houses built over it, and when the gate was opened, there was a still darker passage to be gone through, so that I had to hold my host's hand in order to arrive at all. Then we waded through a stable-yard, about three feet, more or less, deep in litter, with awful smells, to a break-neck staircase, till at last we reached a tolerably decent room. My troubles were now over for a time, and it was a great relief to feel I should have at least a week's rest, and nothing to do but amuse myself, and write up my journals and map.

Still I had to stay at Mushudd for a considerable time, much longer than I had wished, but this delay arose from a variety of reasons. I had to get a number of my things repaired, and Persian workmen are frightfully slow, and I had to arrange for more money; altogether the time passed very heavily. There is, in truth, very little in this city to induce any one to visit it, or stay long, if fortune has cast him into it. There is just one building, the Imam Reza's tomb, worth seeing; and that one there is no chance of any European being permitted to see, except at risk quite incommensurate with the reward. What could be seen from outside, from every point of view, I saw; but, owing to my never having studied the plan of the buildings on the spot, it is, of course, very difficult to form any idea of them from a view of their upper parts, and still more so to describe it. What I did see, however, was the dome of the tomb, the two golden minarets, and the mosque of Gowhur Shah. The first is neither more nor less beautiful in shape than a hundred other domes in Persia, and in symmetry it cannot be compared with many in India; but it is, as far as one can see, entirely covered with what are probably copper-gilt plates, but which the Mushuddees declare are gold. The two minarets—one of which was erected by Nadir Shah, and the other, I understand, by the present Shah—are both exactly alike. They are certainly very striking additions to the building, and have considerable pretensions to beauty, but I really cannot subscribe to the language of Mr. Eastwick, who says "The beauty cannot be exaggerated." I should say the beauty could be very much exaggerated or increased, as well as the description. I have not seen all the magnificent buildings with which India abounds, but there are two the symmetry of the minarets of which are in my opinion very superior

to that of these—namely, the Taj at Agra and the Juma Musjid at Delhi. Both these minarets are covered with gold, and I believe are carved on the capital; but both are in a very great measure spoiled by the balcony which is erected outside at the top of the capital. This balcony is, I conceive, out of proportion with the pillars, which would only bear something exquisitely light and airy round them. The mosque of Gowhur Shah consists of the usual dome and two minarets, all covered with enamelled tile work. That on the dome is, as far as I could judge from a view through a telescope, about 800 yards off, of very coarse material, and is certainly not of a beautiful pattern; but that on the pillars is both beautiful and appropriate. All the Mahummudans talk in terms of rapture of the tile work in the interior, but of course I can say nothing of this.

I asked once if I could go and see the tomb, but was met by such a very strong negative, accompanied by a look of mingled horror and terror, that I desisted from pressing the subject; but I have good reason to believe that the bigotry of the individual had more to do with it than any real objection on the part of the public. On one occasion, without in any way wishing it, or indeed knowing it, I found I had been taken by the Persian servants with me so far that a few steps more and I would have been inside the quadrangle of the Gowhur Shah Mosque; and, further, my Portuguese servant, whose veracity I have no reason to doubt, told me he had been taken right into the enclosure, and that no one said anything to him. Altogether I imagine a visit is not free from danger, but the probability is that there is no great difficulty in entering all but the inner part, which is "Huram,"* and which consists of the enclosure of the tomb itself.

* Literally, unlawful; here used in the sense of sacred.



I. SHRINE OF IMAM REZA, AT MUSHUDD. [*To face page* 283.

But, if I cannot quite consider that there is any very surpassing beauty or symmetry in these buildings, I freely confess that the general effect of the whole is very lovely. The best view is, I think, from the Paeen Kheeaban* Gate; and here the foreground of dead mud houses and dark green trees serves to bring into greater clearness the golden dome and minarets, and the blue domes of the mosque; while the back-ground of brown rugged hills, with their dark shadows and exquisitely tinted lights, contrasts well with the airy appearance of the buildings.

I have said, except these, Mushudd has no buildings of any note, and this is literally the case; the whole presents a uniform level of mud house-tops with a few "badgeers" here and there; and though while there I visited most of the swells, I did not see a single house of any pretension the whole time.

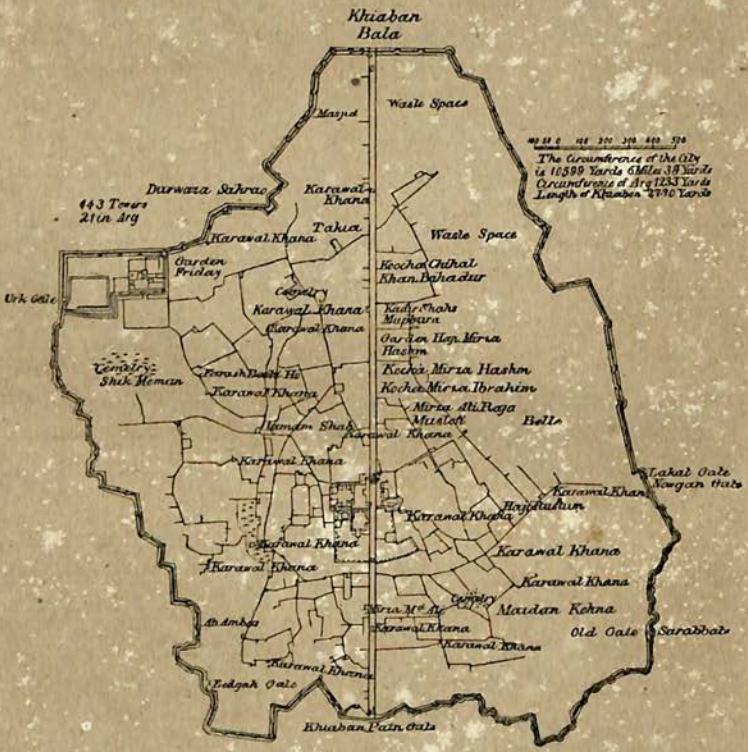
Outside the view is, if anything, more unprepossessing; for, if we except the Imam Reza, which lights up the whole scene, there is nothing but a long line of mud walls to be seen, a few of the higher trees in the Kheeaban alone being visible.

The city is surrounded by a mud rampart, kept in a very fair state, and which is four feet thick at top and about nine feet at bottom. The whole is topped with a parapet a foot thick, but so carelessly made that the loop-holes are often six feet high above the top of the rampart. Outside is what is called "Sheerauzee," viz., a small ditch at the foot of the wall, about eight feet broad, with a low parapet on the crest of its counterscarp, and beyond this again is a ditch, thirty feet broad by ten feet deep. All beyond the outer face of the wall, however, is in a state of thorough disrepair, and there

* The name of the main street of Mushudd.

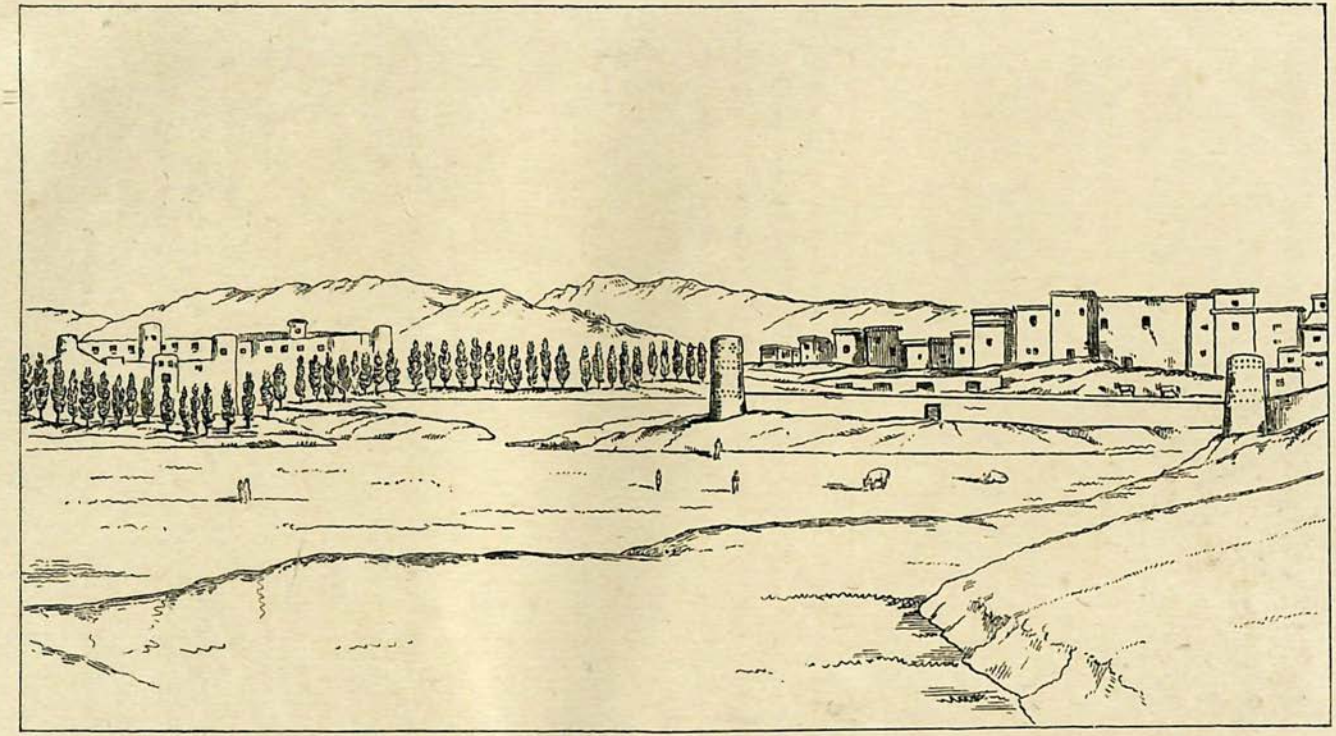
are very few places that are not practicable to infantry, even without ladders.

The outline plan of the city is quite irregular, the wall following the outside of the houses, and consequently the trace is in many parts excessively weak. It, however, more nearly approaches an oblong than any other form, and the longer sides face the north-west and



PLAN OF THE CITY OF MUSHUDD.

south-east. The whole exterior circuit of the city is 10,539 yards, or about six miles; and the greatest length, viz., along the Kheeaban, is 2,780 yards; while the greatest breadth, which is on a line drawn at



I. MUSHUDD-Y-MURGHAB, FROM THE S.W. [*To face page* 285.

right angles to that street just north and west of the Sahun,* is about 2,000 yards.

Mushudd has six gates, viz., the Bala Kheeaban at the north, Paeen Kheeaban, Eedgah, Nowgan and Sarab, and an entrance to the citadel. The plan of all these is the same, viz., on either side of the gate, which is of wood, studded with iron, two towers, thirty feet high, loopholed and connected over the gate by a parapet. In front of each gate there has evidently been a traverse, but all traces of these have almost disappeared, and in their place has grown up a substitute, in the shape of houses. Round the walls are towers at intervals of 100 yards, with conical roofs of twelve inches above the wall, thirty feet in all from the ground.

The chief feature of Mushudd is the street called the Kheeaban, which is perfectly straight, 2,700 yards long, was originally eighty feet broad, but now diminished, which leads right through the city, except where the shrine intervenes. Down the centre of it flows a stream of filthy water, over which, at several points, the inhabitants have erected platforms, where, forgetful of the odours below, they fancy themselves by some clear running stream. On either side of this stream, it is said, there were trees planted the whole length of the Kheeaban, but these magnificent specimens of the place only remain towards the upper part of the street. The Kheeaban certainly has the making of a splendid street. The French would convert it into a thing of beauty for ever; but, when one sees the filthy stream, with people drinking, bathing, and washing themselves, their horses, or clothes in it—the neglected roads, the wretched houses and miserable shops on either side, and the long stretches of mud

* The square in which all the holy buildings are situated.

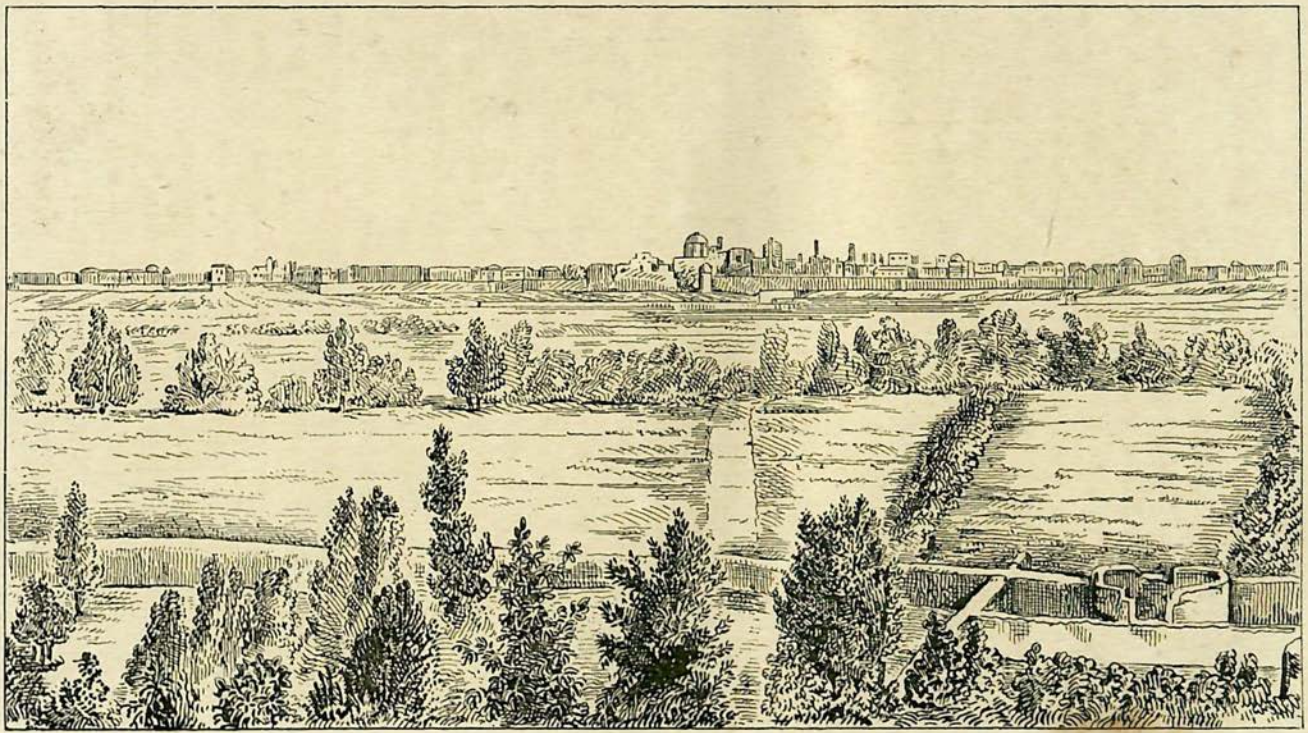
walls, it requires a good deal of imagination to construct a fine roadway out of it.

The Moosullah outside the walls is the most imposing, and in fact the only ruin of any note about Mushudd. It was built in the reign of Shah Sooliman, A.D. 1699, and is remarkable on account of the beauty of the façade of the entrance, and of the enamelled tile work, of which however but little can now be seen, as it is mostly in ruin. It was meant as a place for the celebration of the feast of Koorban.

I paid many visits to the leading men in the city, in fact in this, I gave myself entirely up to the lead of Abbass Khan, and if he said call here, I called. Of course one of the first visits was to the Wullee, or Governor General of Khorassan, the Zahir-oo-dowlah.* He was very polite, and seemed a mild old imbecile, but surely it was in irony the Shah sent to rule one of his most important provinces, this nerveless old mummy, who deserves rather to be called, as I said on leaving, the Zaeef-oo-dowlah.†

I forget all the names of those I went to see, there must have been over twenty of them, for we paid visits nearly every morning or evening. Among those on whom I called was a brother-in-law of the Musheer, named Muhammud Tukkee, who had been educated in Paris, and who in the process, seemed to have imbibed all the vices of that gay capital, without learning any of the good qualities of the people among whom he resided so long. The Musheer, who, I understood, was very anti-English, was also very civil, but he was quite broken with rheumatism or some similar disease, and I don't think he will aid his friends the Russians much in future.

* Light of the State. † Weakness of the State.

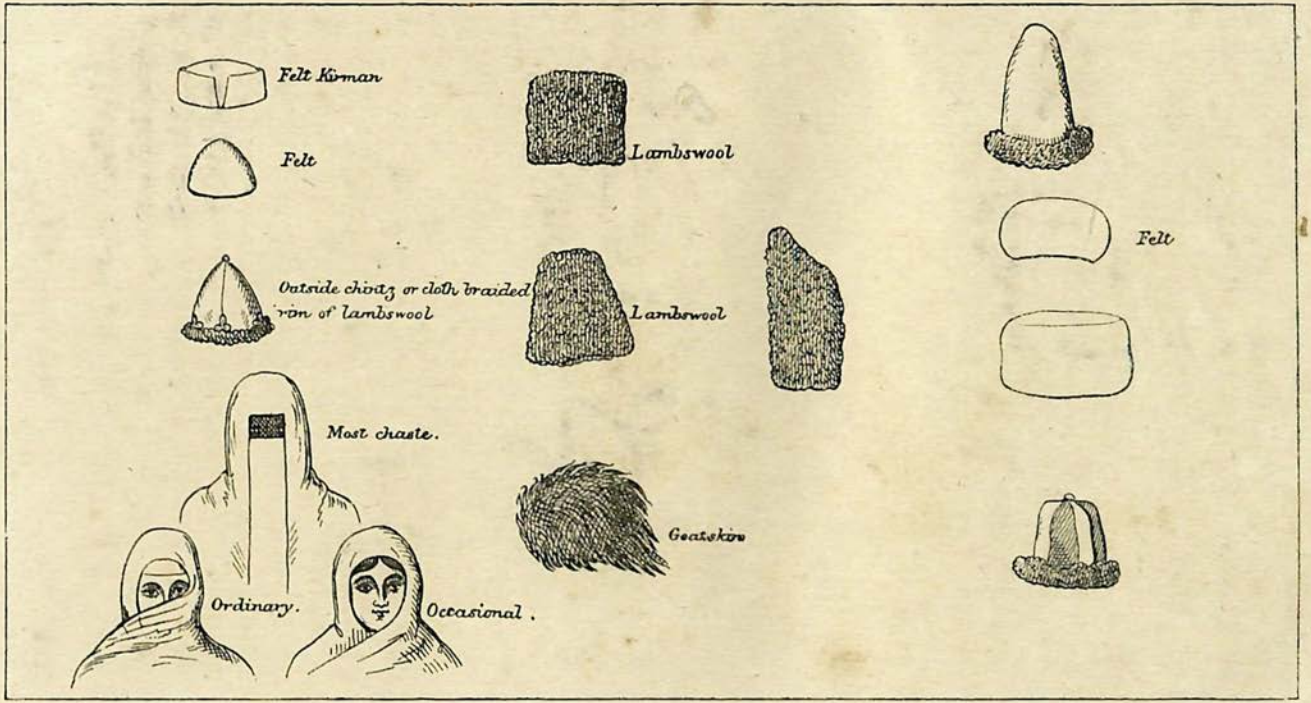


I. MUSHUDD, FROM THE SOUTH. [*To face page* 286.

But all Persians, in this sort of intercourse, are very civil, and very pleasant companions. I had no business to transact with them, or I daresay I should have changed my opinion a bit. One whom I visited was a Colonel in the Shah's army; he said he had been at Bushuhr in the war, and he explained to an admiring audience of "Surhungs" (Lieutenant-Colonels), Gawars (Majors), and Sooltans (Captains), that though the English had taken them by surprise by coming in ships, the Governor of Fars had soon recovered, and had sent such an army, that the English were glad to get under cover of their ships, with whole skins. I laughed, on which the "Surteep" (Colonel) asked, "Why do you laugh?" "Because," I replied, "I have never heard anything so utterly untrue so circumstantially and pleasantly told:" at which the Colonel laughed most heartily; to tell a Persian he lies, if not quite a compliment, at all events implies praise.

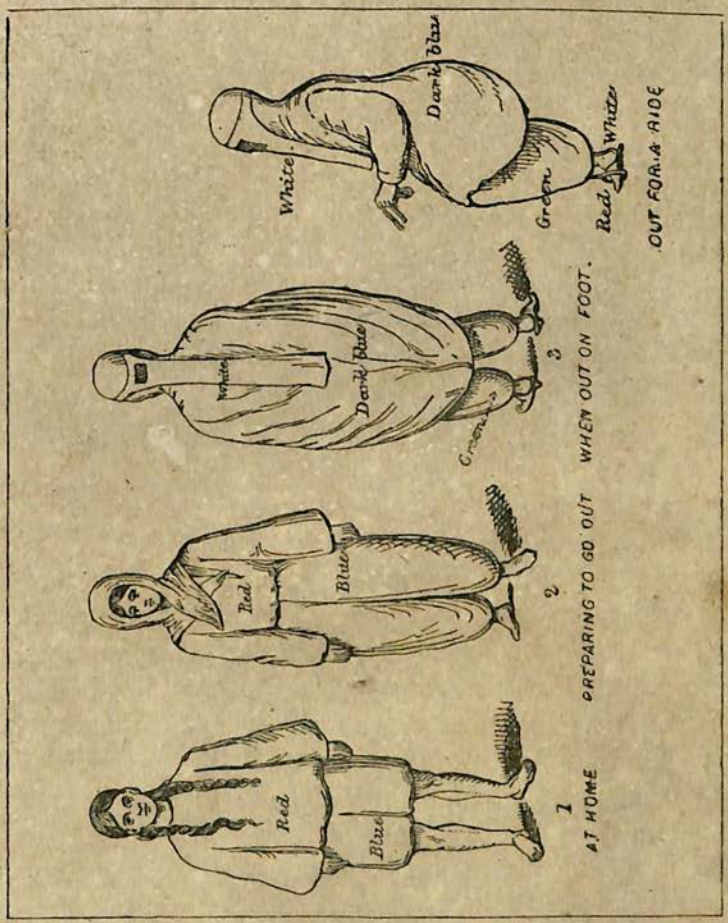
There were eight or nine regiments here, mostly in camp outside the town, some of these were of course better than others, but all were composed of more or less fine material. To look at them without the eye of a soldier, was simply to condemn them as a rabble of dirty slouching-looking ragamuffins; but regarded as food for powder by one who knows the style of article required, they are by no means to be despised. They are dirty, slouching ragamuffins certainly, but brought into trim by English officers they would very soon become fine soldierly fellows. All, even those who came from the wildest parts, seemed to be very quiet men. Indeed this is a trait of the Persian peasantry. With their rough exterior there is gentlemanliness of manner, and quiet determination of demeanour, that is very different from the truculent swaggering of the Afghan.

It may be thought that I should say something about the women of Persia, but the fact is, I cannot claim to know much of them. Not being a German professor, or a *Daily Telegraph* correspondent, I am unable to write a treatise on the fair sex of Persia from the scanty materials at my disposal, which in truth only consist of a sight of a great number of eyes, a few noses, some hands, and several feet and ankles. The fact is, they are so shrouded in their blue or white sheets, that it is impossible to say what the bundle of clothes contains. However, putting two and two together, that is, judging from the eyes and noses, the occasional faces, and the many pretty little girls I have seen, I am inclined to believe that the women of Persia have certainly more than average beauty. European writers have so frequently stated that the women are immoral, that it has become a belief amongst us that they are so. My experience, however, induces me to form quite a contrary opinion. The whole eight months I was in Persia, I never saw a woman make an improper gesture, or give a lascivious look, and if it had been the case that they were so bad as they are painted, I cannot conceive that this would have been the case. Judging, too, from the great quietness of manner of the men, from the absence of all wrangling between women, and also from the sounds of the merry musical voices I have heard at various times and places, I should imagine that they were of cheerful and amiable dispositions. In these countries, where every one sleeps on the roof of their houses, and where consequently, if you wake early, you perforce see many little domestic scenes which in the west are hidden by closed doors and windows, it is impossible always to shut one's eyes to them, and from these it seems to me that the Persian women make up for the extreme cumber-



1. WOMEN'S VEILS AND MEN'S HEAD DRESSES. [*To face page* 288.

someness of their attire when out of doors, by an equally free and easy style of vesture when in-doors. As far as I can make out, they then wear a very loose sort of jacket, which is a little too loose and open, and



PERSIAN LADY'S GET-UP.

a short pair of loose drawers, not reaching lower than the knee, while on their head they generally have a kerchief of some colour. I have before made remarks about the

apparent freedom of the women, and what I have seen since I first touched on the subject, more than convinces me that my opinion is correct. I should say that, if anything, the women have greater freedom of action than women in Europe. A Persian will tell you that no respectable woman is allowed to go out, except to the mosque, the bath, the doctor, or to see her female friends. But this admission proves all I advance. If a woman is permitted to go to these places in such complete disguise, I should say that it was impossible to prevent her going anywhere she liked, or speaking to or meeting whom she chose. Another point is, that inside the four walls of the prison-like buildings in which these people delight, the purdah is by no means strictly insisted on, nor is the eye of man supposed to have such an evil effect as outside. I once was staying with a Persian noble in this country, and, as the windows of all my rooms overlooked the garden, I could not help noticing this fact, which was so contrary to my former belief. The women went about quite openly, and though the men-servants were not, I understand, supposed to enter, they did so frequently and openly, and must have known every feature of their master's wives as well as servants do in Europe. Therefore, those of my fair countrywomen who are disposed to pity the unhappy lot of their sisters in Persia, immured in dark rooms, and only permitted to look on an individual of blue-beardish propensities, must, I fear keep their pity for more fitting objects. With all this, I am far from saying theirs can be a very happy lot. These people have no idea of the sanctity of monogamy, which is happily not only the law but the wish of all European races; and a man is not thought a worse man, or husband, because he has three or four permanent, and

two or three temporary, wives. Whatever the men may say, it is not in human nature to believe that the women appreciate this, for there is that in a woman's nature, which yearns towards calling and feeling some one being her own absolutely; and I do not believe that woman can any more share her affection for her master with another, than she can view with equanimity the love of her child diverted from her. However, wives in Persia are, as elsewhere, expensive luxuries; and so if any census of the marriages could be taken, I think it would be found that the number of men with more than one wife at a time, would be infinitesimally small, not more perhaps than 2 per cent.

From women to jewellery is a natural and easy transition. I made many inquiries in Persia for specimens of the jewellery of the country, but could find very little. A few filagree bracelets and very coarse rings were all I could procure. At Mushudd, with great difficulty, I managed to secure some turquoises, but I had to pay a heavy price for them, and I believe they can be got just as cheap in Europe, and certainly one would have a far greater selection.

The manufacture, *par excellence*, of Khorassan is carpets, and it is possible, though not without some hunting, to get very good specimens in Mushudd. The Khorassan carpet is often made in very gaudy patterns of flowers, but those from Birjund are beautifully soft in texture and of very brilliant colour, yet in good taste.

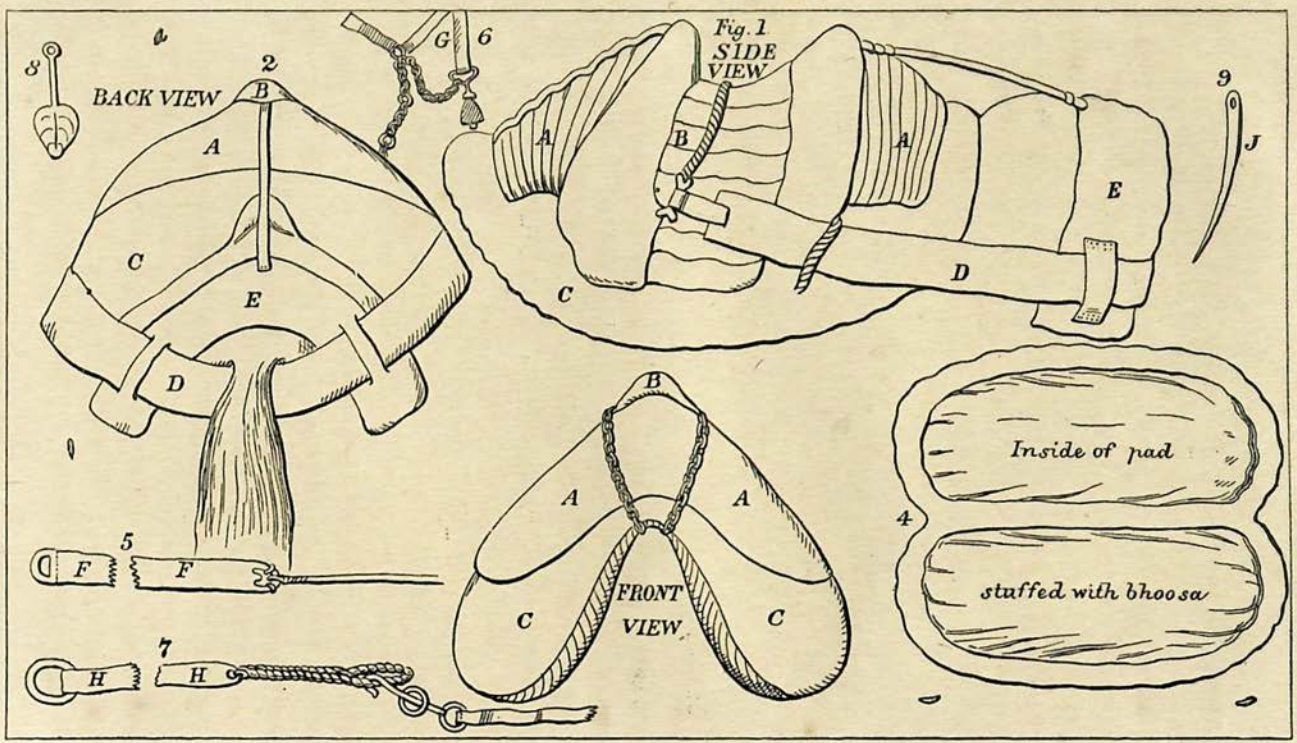
Among the manufactures of Mushudd I must not forget to mention cups, bowls, and vases made of a stone called Sung-y-Seeah, but which I take to be nothing but slate. They are cut out of a solid block, and are then very prettily carved, in patterns very like

the embroidery generally seen on the coats of the inhabitants. I bought several, and was fortunate enough to succeed in getting them all safely to England, though I certainly never expected to do so.

At Mushudd I got rid of Budrooee. I would gladly have kept him on, but as he said his mules required rest there was no help for it. Although Persian servants as a general rule are about as bad as they well can be, there is one exception which must be made, viz., in favour of Persian muleteers. From Sheeraz to Mushudd, I had in Mr. Budrooee a most excellent hard-working attendant. He was always cheery, always obedient, never grumbled at the length of the marches, and was always ready to go anywhere, while the care he took of his animals was most commendable. Before going to Persia I had imbibed a very bad idea of Persian muleteers, from some men who were brought to Abyssinia in that capacity. These certainly were the most useless and lazy blackguards I ever saw; but then they were not "Katirchees,"* but merely stray Persians who were picked up on the spot. Of course, also, I do not know whether even a real muleteer would continue to bestow as much care on his animals, if he were only their hired attendant; probably not. I, therefore, think should it be again necessary to get mules from Persia, it will be best to endeavour to enter into some arrangement with them, by which they may retain a strong personal interest in the welfare of their animals, and also to see that the real "Katirchee" is enlisted.

Mules are procurable all over Western and Southern Persia, especially about Kirmanshah and Sheeraz. A good animal can be procured in ordinary times for 20

* Muleteers.



I. PERSIAN MULE EQUIPMENT. [To face page 292.

tomams, and a first-class one for 40 tomams, while, of course, very superior animals go for fancy prices up to 60 tomams; but of course these rates would be much increased if there were a sudden demand for them. The ordinary hire for a mule is from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 krans per diem, according to the country they are to travel through.

Although they take the greatest care of their mules, I have never seen more than an average of one man to every three mules, and as they are particular about the way they are loaded, and seldom permit others to interfere, this number is sufficient to do all the loading and unloading.

The pack saddle in general use, is a pad called Paloong, of which I give the following sketches.

The Paloong costs about two tomams, and is always sold inclusive with the "Koonakee," a broad leather strap which goes round the flank, and the "Ashoorma," a carpet pad which covers the loins. The Paloong is made of felt and carpeting stuffed with common "bhoosa" or chopped straw. AA, in the sketches, is made of felt; B is a carpet cover over the pad; C is a covering of blanket which encloses the stuffing; D is the Koonakee, and E the Ashoorma. F is a girth (Tung) made either of hair or leather, costing about two krans. G is a headstall made of hair, the noseband is often iron, and there is always a strong chain attached to it, while under the throat strap is often hung a bell; the cost of this is about three krans. H is another girth called a "Kafa;" it is made of hair, and is very long, to go right round the whole load. It has a continuation consisting of hooks and rings for tightening, and it costs about four krans. Besides this every mule has a large nose-bag, "tobra," of hair for giving the usual feed of bhoosa,

and a smaller one for grain. These together cost about three krans. Then there is a spoon, I, (paloong charan) for cleaning the pad of mud, &c.; a needle, J, 9 inches long, for mending; a curry comb (kasho), a long hair rope for tying up the load, and finally a spare blanket, which is usually placed over the pad and under the girth. The whole outfit does not cost more than 3½ tomams, or about £1 5s. in English money. A Persian mule will carry 3 cwt. over the worst roads and do so continually.

At Mushudd, I had an opportunity of seeing several regiments of the Persian army, viz., those of Arab-o-Ajam, Damghan-o-Semnan, Kurraee, Toorsheez, and Kusveen. They were mostly encamped outside the city in tents scattered about anyhow and nohow. I used often to take them in my evening ride, and they were always glad to see me, and reply to my questions.

They are, taken as a general rule, men of fine physique, and very hardy, muscular frames, and just the fellows to make into very fine soldiers; but they are shockingly neglected by the Government. God has given the Shah as fine a body of men as could be wished for, but he does nothing whatever for them. They are supposed to receive 7 tomams per annum, but the fact is, even this small amount has to go through so many hands, cursed with the cancer "Moodukhil,"* which destroys all chance of progress in Persia, that he seldom gets more than half. The soldiers, however, do receive their rations regularly, and these being ample they manage to get on somehow.

The uniform consists of a black lambswool busby, with a comical representation of the lion and the sun

* Favouritism.

in brass on the front. This looks like a kitten who has out of mischief climbed to the top of a circular saw, and having got there does not appreciate the situation, as is evidenced by a quaint look of pain on his face. The coat is a dark blue tunic, made after the execrable European model, with white bands across the breast. The trousers are also blue, with a red stripe. They wear any shoes or no shoes according to their fancy; and it is needless to add that nothing is ever put on with the smallest attempt at smartness. All the infantry are armed with clumsy percussion smooth-bore muskets and bayonets, with locks of French manufacture. No care whatever is taken of the muskets; the probability is that more than half would not go off, and if they did—as musketry instruction is not, I need hardly say, introduced into the Persian army—they could not be expected to hit anything. The uniform which should be adopted for the Persian army is the neat light-blue frockcoat common to the country, and loose blue drawers, with the white "malekee" shoe. This, with belts of untanned leather, such as the irregular horsemen wear, would be a most comfortable and serviceable outfit.

The best of the regiments I saw was the Kusveen, half of which was at Kullat-y-Nadir, but they had a Colonel who was altogether superior to the general run of Persian officers.

The ranks of the Persian Army are Surteep, who answers to our Colonel; Ameer-y-Pung, or Brigadier-General; and Ameer-y-Toman, or Major-General. In a battalion they have a Surhung (the Serang of India), Lieutenant-Colonel; one Yawur, Major; Sooltan, Captain; Naib-y-Awwal or 1st Lieutenant, and Naib-y-Doyum or 2nd ditto. A sergeant is called Vukeel, and a cor-

poral Dahbashee,* and a private a Surbáz, which last means that he is in the habit of "playing with his head"—not a bad name for a soldier, and much better than our word, which comes from "solidus," a Roman coin, so that a cockney might with justice call a man induced to enlist by a glowing account of the military profession, and to clinch the bargain by taking a shilling, a "Sold-yer."

The plan by which the Persian Army is raised is by conscription, very arbitrarily applied to towns, districts, or tribes. That is, the War Office does not take much trouble to proportion its demands agreeably to the statistics of the population of these divisions, but simply says to such and such a town, district or tribe, "You will supply one or two regiments;" and as there are many towns which do not produce sufficiently staunch "food for powder," and others who get off on one plea or another, the burden of the conscription falls unequally on the others, and with special severity on the Ileats.† The men are supposed to be replaced by fresh contingents; but it practically happens that, if a man does not happen to wish to run away, or cannot bribe to get himself let off, he is a soldier for the rest of his natural days, or, at least, till he is quite worn out, and then he is turned off like a dog.

The best regiments undoubtedly come from Azurbaijan, and from tribes of Toork origin, who are much the staunchest fighting men in Persia.

Of course, in an army that is absolutely without system there can be no discipline, and one cannot expect the officers to be good for much. All promotion goes entirely by favouritism or the payment of hard coin.

* Literally a chief of ten men. † A nomad tribe.

Still, I met many officers of the Persian troops who only wanted sufficient instruction and good wholesome discipline to make them into very fair specimens. There is no doubt that the Persian is, generally speaking, an intelligent individual, and his physique being excellent, there is no reason why he should not make a very superior soldier.

I suppose he is very much given to plunder; at least every one seems to say so; but then the same thing is always said of every irregular soldier. I know there was one thing which struck me especially, and that was the quiet, cheery, and apparently submissive nature of the men whom I saw. A Persian infantry soldier is credited with wonderful powers of marching; but it must be remembered that nearly every other man has his donkey to ride. I only twice saw Persian soldiers on a long march, and that was going to and returning from Surrukhs, and I certainly then saw a very large number of stragglers, who, when they came in, looked utterly done up. Altogether I do not think that the Persian can touch the Indian in his powers of marching.

Amongst the troops at Mushudd, was a body of cavalry, drawn from the Shah Sewunds, a large tribe, I believe, of Toork descent, who came from the districts of Mishkeen and Ardebeel, in the province of Azurbaijan. They were very badly mounted, and though the men were extremely fine fellows, they were generally much inferior to the Koordish horsemen whom I saw afterwards on the Toorkmun frontier.

The artillery is probably the most efficient branch of the Persian army, and this may, to some extent, be owing to the good system introduced when they had the advantage of being commanded by English officers. They are of course not smart, but they are very rough

and ready, and I was much pleased with the way they handled their guns, on the march to Surrukhs.

It is difficult to form any idea of what the strength of the Persian army is, and this from the impossibility of getting any reliable statistics. I shall not, therefore, attempt to estimate their probable numbers, but this much is certain, that Persia could well afford to keep up an army of 120,000 men, and that if these were commanded and disciplined by European officers, they would be quite a match for the troops of the only power who is likely to attack them.

A "Shamkhalchee" is a species of soldier, which as far as I know, is peculiar to Persia. Sometimes he is mounted, sometimes on foot. Those I saw were generally mounted.

The "Shumkhal," from which he takes his name, is a long heavy rifle, matchlock or percussion, which carries about 300 to 400 yards, and has two rests, made of iron, called "shakh." The accompanying sketch will explain.

a. is the rest, called shakh-y-toofung.

b. the belt. This is often profusely though rudely ornamented with brass, and sometimes silver. It is called "Bund Keesee."

c. a saltcellar of leather.

d. bullet-pouch, leather ornamented with brass.

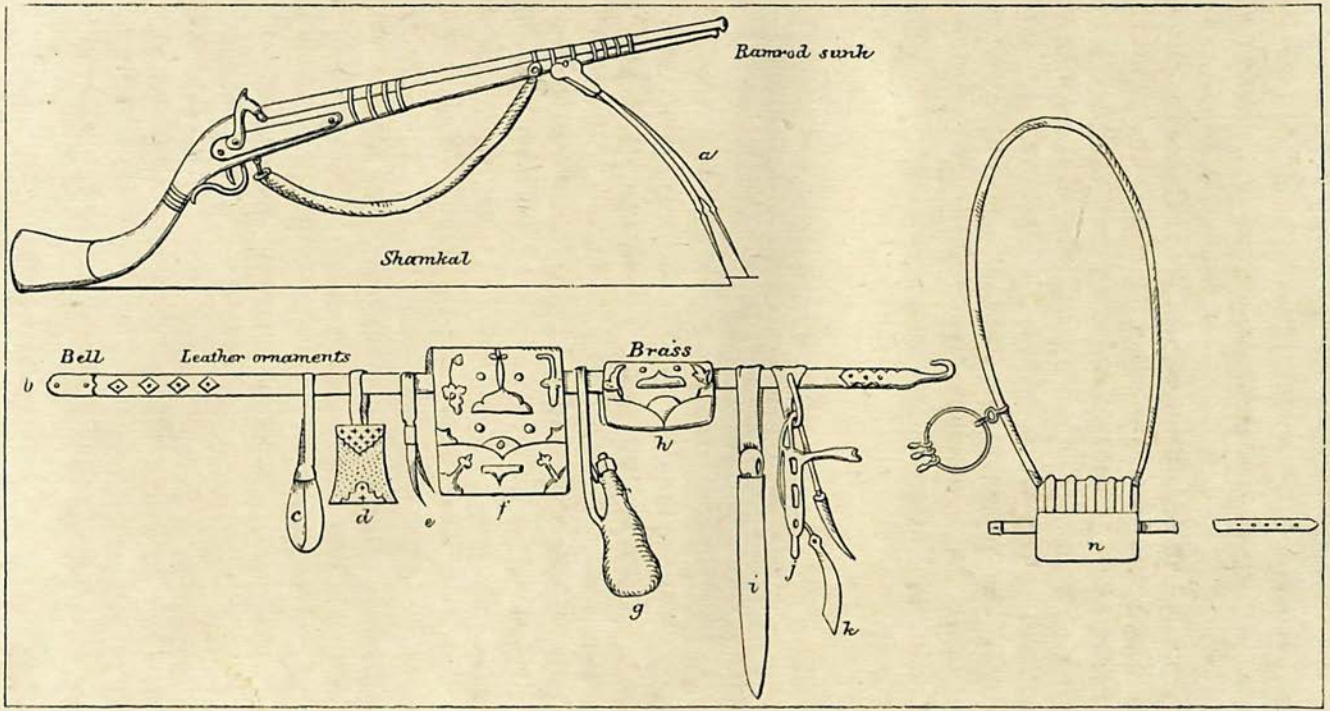
e. needlecase.

f. "Kummur Keesee," a pouch of leather, profusely ornamented with brass, as in sketch.

g. powder-flask, of leather, with a cork attached by a string.

h. another pouch, ornamented like the above.

i. "Kard," a sort of hunting-knife, used for every purpose.



1. SHAMKALCHI EQUIPMENT. [To face page 298.

j. Kahachar, a turn and nipple-screw
k. a piece of iron for cleaning rifle.
l. "Sumbakash," a bit of iron for pulling out the ramrod.

These three are hung on a hook on the belt.

m. "Katar-hasnee," cap-holder.
n. "Katar-wasnee," powder-measure.

While at Mushudd I was asked several times to dine with various friends, among whom I may mention Muhumud Tukkeh Khan and Behbood Khan of Kullat-y-Nadir.

These entertainments generally took place in an upper room; the tablecloth, which was seldom clean, and never white, was spread on the floor, and we all sat round, the Persians in that excruciating position they are so fond of, sitting on their heels, I adopting the easier position, said to be peculiar to Turks and tailors. I was invariably asked to bring my own knives and forks, and I added a tumbler and some enamelled iron plates.

The food was in great variety, and the cooking by no means bad, although there was always too much grease in everything to suit my taste. Still, with the addition of plenty of pepper, which I have found deadens the nauseating taste of the grease, I used to manage to get through my part with sufficient success. One great feature of these feasts is the amount of rice which is eaten, and I must say that, till I saw it in Persia, I had no idea how it should be cooked. Indians rather pride themselves on knowing how to cook rice, but I never saw it so beautifully prepared as in Persia. Each grain was done to perfection, and in letting a spoonful of it fall on one's plate, each grain fell separately, like flakes of snow.

Of course it gives one rather a turn at first to see everything eaten with the fingers, and especially to

observe your host, with *empressement*, pick out a greasy tit-bit, and transfer it to your plate. Still I think this is something of a prejudice, as if care is taken to clean one's hands thoroughly beforehand, I can see no objection to the practice. What makes it nasty is, that they do not wash their hands between each course.

The waiting was always very good, but once or twice when I did not bring my own servant, who had been instructed in the prejudices of the Furrungee, I found it somewhat difficult to get a plate cleaned for me.

After everything is over, a ewer and basin are brought round to wash one's hands and mouth. These are called "aftab" and "higgun" respectively. They are sometimes made of silver, but generally of copper tinned over.

The "aftabs" are often of very artistic shapes, and the basin has an excellent arrangement, consisting of a perforated cover, through which all the water escapes, and is not seen. Each person, in turn, washes his hands, and then his mouth, spitting the water out into the basin, and often making very disgusting noises, which quite disgust a European, or, at all events, an Englishman.

One of the things which strike one in Persia is not only the total absence of the practice of bearing arms among the peasantry, but its being the almost invariable custom of officials to dispense with all guards about their person. In Afghanistan, and also in our own districts on the north-western frontier, it is common to see men ploughing with their matchlocks on their backs; and even in the heart of the Peshawur cantonments, with ladies and children constantly passing, I have seen truculent-looking scoundrels stalking about, armed to the teeth.

But in Persia this is not the case. When calling on any Persian gentleman, even men like the Suddur Azam at Tehran, or the Zuheer-oo-Dowla at Mushudd, I have been struck by the absence of all arms, not only on the persons of these gentlemen themselves, but among their attendants. Thinking this very strange in such a country, I have always been on the look out to see if armed men were ever concealed anywhere, but I have never been able to discover any; therefore I must conclude that in this, as in most other respects, the Persians are far ahead of the Afghans.

One of the first things I did on arrival, was to send off the following telegram to Mr. Aitchison the Foreign Secretary.

"Macgregor, Aitchison,
"Mushudd, Simla,

"Have collected valuable and complete information about Khorassan, and could do same for whole Northern and Western Afghan border if permitted to travel through Afghan Toorkestan to Herat. But Herat authorities refuse permission to visit Herat (regarding which I have despatched a report). I consider it of vital importance that an English officer should visit this tract at once. Authorities do not object if English Government wish, and the danger is not worth weighing. Please tell the Amir shall probably go to Merv in a few days. Telegraph care British Agent Mushudd through Tehran and Peshawur." (Giving this to Abbass Khan, I got him to get a man to take it to Tehran; but as the sequel proved, I might have saved myself the trouble, and my pocket the expense.)

I then wrote a long letter describing shortly my travels, my motives in going on to Herat, and lastly the

treatment I had received, but of this we have already had enough.

I also gave Mr. Aitchison a slight sketch of my views about Persia and Merv, which I have elaborated in my last chapter. The first point noticed by me was the very general impression, amounting almost to a certainty in the minds of almost every man in Khorassan, that the Russians are bent on taking Merv. "Now," I continued, "this may be right or wrong, but of this I am certain, the Tukkeh Toorkmuns, to whom Mowr belongs, are absolutely convinced of it." I had a long talk at Furreemoon the other day with one of their chiefs (Burdee Morad Bai), and he told me this, and that the Khan (Gowshee) was preparing for the struggle by making a strong fort, &c. He added in the usual vainglorious style of these Asiatics, that the Tukkehs were not afraid of the Russians, and, Inshalla! would show them what a good sword could do. Now this spirit is just what the Russians want; it is really nearly all froth, but is just the spirit which is likely to lead these people to commit the acts of aggression which will give the Russians the excuse they want. Even now they have got a Russian prisoner amongst them. That the Russians can take Mowr whenever they like there is no doubt, the route by the Attruk is perfectly practicable, with water all the way after the cold weather, and when they are at Mowr, remember Herat is only 200 miles off. From what I hear, and from what I saw at Ghorian and Kohsan, the defences of Herat are in the last state of dissolution, while no unanimity in defence whatever can be expected from a garrison composed of such irreconcileable elements as are now there; Yakub has a strong party in the province, the Amir has, of course, his own people; Md.

Oomar is said to have hopes, as also Abdool-rahman, while a considerable number of the inhabitants say, "Let us have something settled; if the English won't come, then let us have the Russians." With all this, as far as I know, we have no one to give us really reliable information, either at Herat or at Mowr, and the British Agent here says he has no orders about anything. No orders, and no money to get information, and no knowledge of what our Government want, or don't want.

I have now seen a good deal of these Persians, and my opinion, formed after very many talks with all classes, is that while they fear the Russians, and know themselves to be powerless, they like us personally, and would gladly, as far as in them lies, do anything for us if they dared. But, they say, what are we to do? the English do not seem to care, and the Russians are very powerful. In fact, there is a very general impression that they are more so than we are, and also that though they know they should distrust the Russians, they cannot turn to us. All this makes one think over the advantages of a Persian alliance. The greatest difficulty is that they are Sheeas, and as such are heartily detested by those round them whom we must try to have on our side, *i.e.* the Afghans and Turks; but there is this to be said in favour of trying the effect of supporting Persia:—as long as the Russians can be kept where they are now, the danger with which we are menaced by their proximity may be prevented; but directly they come to get possession of Merv and Surrukhs, it may only be cured. Now, if Russia could calculate on the assistance of Persia, in men, supplies and information, no one can doubt that there need be no hesitation in not only taking these places when it suits her so to do,

but also in advancing on Herat; and as Persia by herself is helpless, there is no reasonable ground for supposing that she can refuse her assistance; but, if on the other hand, Persia assured of our aid, was unfriendly, it needs no great strategical acumen to perceive that Russia could not move a step towards one or the other, as long as there was a power on the flank of her communications unfriendly and unsubdued. She would therefore be reduced to the necessity of turning back several pages as it were, and commencing her operations not by the seizure of Mowr, but of Tehran. To do so she must throw off the mask before she has got into a seriously dangerous position to us, and she will exasperate the Persians, as well as, I hope, awake us.

It seems to me that this is the last chance we shall have of preventing the disease we must cure, or succumb to, if we neglect it any longer. This year is, I think, too late for any attempt, but next spring who can say what may not be tried. Therefore it seems to me, that *now* is the *latest safe date* for preventing by statesmanship that which, if the opportunity is let slip, must be cured by war. If you Foreign Office gentlemen let this chance go by, then will come that of us soldiers, and we shall have to commence the campaign seriously weighted by your supineness.

I found on arrival that Abbass Khan, thinking I was coming up to Mushudd by way of Toorbut, Ishall, and Tubbus, had sent all my letters down that road to meet me. This was a bitter disappointment to me, for, though I did not expect any very important letters, after travelling for three months without hearing a single word from the outer world, one gets a craving for news, like unto the longing for vegetable diet which seizes sailors long out; but if I had only known what

was coming in this long wished-for packet, I think I would have made it something difficult for the messenger to catch me. I am sure, I would rather he had been at the bottom of the sea.

Meanwhile, I amused myself in the day by writing, and devouring a volume of the *Edinburgh* I had found in a corner of one of the rooms; in talking to Abbass, and seeing various individuals who might help me in my onward journey. Altogether, I was at this time pretty happy, my hopes were bounding high with the prospect of the adventures before me.

A few days after my arrival, a messenger came in from Merv in reply to my letter from Furreemoon, entrusted to Burdee Morad. He was introduced, after dark, with a great deal of mystery, and the message he was entrusted with was to the effect that Gowsheed Khan was a servant of the English, and he would be very glad if I would come and see him, adding, that if I accepted Burdee Morad as a hostage for my safe return, well and good, if not he would send another.

My object in going to Merv was to see for myself the state of affairs at that place, and inquire, on the spot, as to the practicability of the roads which lead from it to the Caspian and the Oxus, and towards Afghanistan, at the important strategical points of Maimuna, Bala Moorghab, and Herat. From Merv, I proposed to go on to the Oxus at Karkee, and thence through the totally unknown* country, on the right bank of that river, to Kolab. By this means, I should traverse ground that was quite new to the European world, and I should

* Then (1875) totally unknown as far as I knew. Since then I have, of course, heard of the Russian Expedition to Hissar, which, at the very time I contemplated paying this country a visit, was being thoroughly explored by Russian officers; thus showing that our rivals are more awake to the necessity of getting information than we are.

gain a thorough knowledge of all the routes from Toorkistan to the Oxus.

From Kolab, I purposed to cross over to Koondoz, and from thence go to Bamian, and make my way through the Huzarajat to Herat once more.

But, alas for the vanity of human hopes, all this vision was doomed to be rudely dissipated! On the fifth or sixth day after I got to Mushudd, the long looked-for "chuppurchi"* of the British Mission turned up. I had no reason to expect any letters but perhaps a line from Captain Napier, or some of the Mission sending me a few papers—inasmuch as my plans about going on to Herát, and through the Huzarajat, had not been made up till I was approaching that place, and I was far beyond communication with the outer world. I knew, therefore, that no one could be aware what those plans were; though, I must confess, I was perfectly convinced that if they had been known to the Government it might cost them moments of nervous agitation; not about me, but about that principle of non-intervention so much talked about, and which, it seems to be considered, can be best maintained by the ostrich-like device of hiding their heads in the sand of ignorance and complacency, and knowing nothing. It was, therefore, quite unsuspectingly that I opened the bag, and quite natural that I seized an official looking document first.

It was from Her Britannic Majesty's Envoy and Ambassador, and it contained words to this effect, for I have lost the letter itself:—

"I have the honour, by the direction of His Excellency the Viceroy in India, to inform you that you are prohibited from travelling in Afghanistan or Toorkistan, or going beyond the boundary of Persia."

* Courier.

The letter dropped from my hand, and for a moment I felt quite sick with the bitter disappointment these words caused me. Picking it up, I again and again read it, still with a faint scintillation of hope that it might not quite exclude me from all further enterprise. But the words were only too clear, "You are not to enter Toorkistan or Afghanistan, or go beyond the boundary of Persia." Not to enter Toorkistan or Afghanistan, or go beyond the border of Persia, it was clear I was debarred from going anywhere of the smallest interest, or offering the least hopes of distinction; and then I remembered Mr. Aitchison's frigid rejection of my offer for *any information*, and I confessed, with bitterness, that I had been forewarned.

I *had* been forewarned, but I had, in the days when the spirit of adventure rose high in me, not heeded the warning.. I argued, "I can understand their not wishing to send me on a formal mission; I can quite understand the frame of mind which would make a man think it is better to save a few rupees *in his time* than spend it on a venture which may only bear fruit *after* he has gone; but surely, when I have not asked for the expenditure of one farthing, or even asked for any protection entailing one iota of responsibility on Government, I shall be let alone, even if it should become known that I proposed to extend my travels." But the result proved otherwise. Whether that letter was due to the sole unaided intellect of him from whom the order emanated, or whether I owed it to the promptings of any one seized by the curse of jealousy or the more withering canker of over-zeal, it proved the extent to which "masterly inactivity" could go. Hitherto there had been some charm in the trip. The unknown in geography has always to me the same witchery that the

candle has to the moth, or the flash of a woman's eye has to the hardest man. But this was all at an end, and it was with a sickening feeling that I remembered I was hundreds of miles away from civilization, miles of dreary wastes and melancholy burnt-up hills; that I had marched all these miles, endured all these hardships, risked my health and my life, and spent my hardly-won coin, for nothing. It never occurred to me to disobey the order, and I trust no soldier will think it ought to have occurred to me. It was so curtly distinct that it could admit of but one interpretation. It was perfectly clear that my further journey must cease, unless I chose to resign my commission.

"Please, sir, 'breckfuss' ready," was my incomparable boy's practical attempt to break the reverie into which I was plunged, sitting half stunned by the bad news which the chupprassi had brought. Some letting off of the steam was absolutely necessary, so I d—d my boy, much to his astonishment, cursed Persia and the Persians, in which he heartily concurred, and—for one must keep within bounds in recording one's thoughts of superior officers—wished those who had ordered me were at the bottom of the sea, with the millstone, "masterly inactivity," round their necks.

I very soon recovered my equanimity, being of an elastic nature, but I never again took the interest in the trip that I had hitherto. Now I regarded it as a thing to be got over at once; before, I had not cared how long it lasted.

Of course, it is impossible to say how far I might have been successful in this attempt; but I am entitled to speak with authority on one point. I do not think, regard being had to the present state of feeling in Central Asia, that I need have feared anything more

serious than being occasionally delayed, or, perhaps, even being obliged to turn aside to take another line. As to actual danger to my life, I am sure there was none from the chiefs; and if I had been killed by robbers, it is no more than may happen to any English officer any day in the districts of Peshawur, or to any traveller on the main roads of Persia.

The result of this trip, I am vain enough to believe, would have been that the English Government would have been in possession of every route from Toorkistan to the Oxus, and from the Oxus to Afghanistan, and between Kabul and Herat; of the resources of all the states passed through, and of the feeling of the chiefs towards us; in fact, of the information which my knowledge of the amount we possessed told me was what was most required to enable our Government to arrive at a clear idea of what ought to be done when called on to provide measures for the defence of our Indian empire.

END OF VOL. I.

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